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The Beaver

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Rogers' Rangers and the Frontier War
'Clay from Feet to Forehead'

The Beaver

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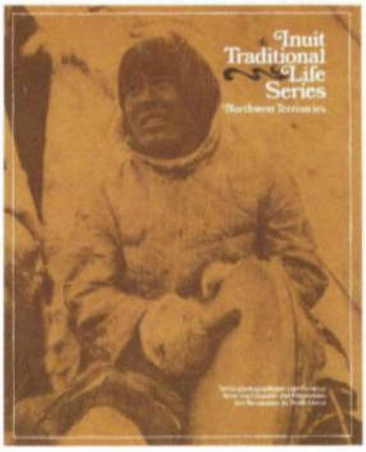

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The Beaver

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The Whole Truth of History

A subscriber recently wrote demanding a guarantee that every word in every issue of this magazine represents the whole, unvarnished and absolute truth. Similar letters must arrive regularly at the Vatican demanding that the Pope guarantee every incident recorded in the Bible. To some extent, the Pope might find it easier to produce a satisfactory response. In the matter of the Good Book, questions of faith are involved and it is entirely possible for those in the first rank of believers to accept, without question, the miracle of the loaves and fishes, even though they have never actually seen the thing done themselves. Others will speak of the "symbolic truth" of the incident in which a few loaves of bread and a few small fish are said to have fed a multitude.

History, on the other hand, is not Holy Writ and "the whole truth of history" can be difficult, if not impossible, to find. The historian is constantly searching for truth, but the past is like a dark room in which we grope and stumble. We may, from time to time, reach out and touch an object that is unmistakably a table or chair; we may strike a match and in the brief moment of illumination see dim shapes in the gloom. Occasionally the lights may actually come on for a moment, but for much of the time the exact truth about the past is hard to locate, record and evaluate.

There are plenty of tokens and clues concealed here and there, and there is information available to those who know where to look. The dead left letters, journals, books and documents behind and with the aid of these we can reconstruct a version of the past that seems accurate — until new materials come to light and tell us a slightly different story.

Historians are constantly revising their view of the past in the light of new discoveries and new interpretations of old material. Over time, as well, attitudes toward history and what it is may change. A good historian may strive to interpret historical material with a cool, dispassionate, objective and open mind, but it is difficult to divorce the mind entirely from the attitudes and biases of one's own time and place. Because of who we are and what we know, we tend to view the past in a certain way. The picture can be distorted, the emphasis shifted.

An earlier school of historians, for example, may have seen history as, exclusively, the chronicle of noble deeds, all of which combine to confirm the "greatness" of a people or a country. "What is history but a fable agreed upon?", asked Napoleon in a quiet moment when he was not making history himself.

We flatter ourselves that we are above using history as propaganda, and claim that the historian of today looks directly at "the facts" with a clear, cold eye, unlike the "unscientific" romantics of the past. It may well be, however, that future observers will detect in our work a bias of which we are blissfully unaware. Historians, after all, are human beings.

The standard example of "a fable agreed upon" is the whitewashing of Henry Tudor (King Henry VII) at the expense of King Richard III who is usually portrayed as one of the great monsters of history, a child-murderer who brought England to the brink of ruin. This dismal view was re-enforced by Shakespeare in his play and it is almost universally accepted today in spite of our knowledge that the play was based on the distortions of Tudor "historians" such as Polydore Vergil and Thomas More, who blackened the name of the last of the Yorkist kings in order to justify and enhance the slender claims of Henry Tudor. There is evidence that indicates that Richard was an able administrator who was generally well-liked, probably did not murder the princes in the Tower and can be credited with such undespotic and enlightened innovations as the creation of the Council of the North, an early attempt at governmental decentralization. The "fable" persists, however, and it is unlikely that the more accurate, but prosaic view will prevail at this late date.

A sceptical mind is an important attribute of the historian in search of the elusive truth. Every "fact" must be put to the test, every assertion carefully examined and in the end, even when there is plenty of documentary evidence, judgement and interpretation are necessary. It might be supposed, for example, that the existence of some letters, a journal or a diary eliminates the need for further investigation. The "facts" are there. The historian need only copy them down. But what if the person who wrote the letters was not entirely truthful? What if the diary is peppered with unfounded gossip? What if the keeper of the journal was trying to cover something up? The historian must take all these and other possibilities into account while drawing conclusions. It is not an easy task. It is never enough to be diligent; a degree of wisdom is also essential.

Then we have those well-known erroneous "facts" that roam the world like chain-letters. I once attended a banquet on a Mohawk reserve near Montreal at which the after-dinner speakers began to list some of the shortcomings of early European intruders in North

America. Eventually there was a lot of shouting and fist banging and when I heard somebody yell that the Hudson's Bay Company had introduced scalping and smallpox-infested blankets to the former "Earthly Paradise", I felt that I, as one of two representatives of the Honourable Company in the hall, should rise and make a categorical denial. Discretion, however, proved to be the better part of valour and, under the circumstances, it seemed wiser to let the fable prevail for the time being. There are, after all, better and undoubtedly safer forums upon which to correct historical inaccuracy.

Historical "truth" remains difficult to pin down, even when there are living eye-witnesses. I almost wrote "especially when there are living eye-witnesses."

attacked, many seeking refuge in a hotel bar where they finished off the liquor.

Canadians who were there claim that the hotel bar was used as a dressing station for the wounded and it is an inescapable fact that the only Victoria Cross won at Hong Kong was awarded posthumously to Sergeant-Major John Robert Osborn of the Winnipeg Grenadiers, who fought bravely with his men against superior odds. He died horribly after throwing his body over an enemy grenade in order to save the lives of his comrades. Although there were undoubtedly some soldiers who ran away — such are to be found at any battle — one cannot help feeling that the Maltby report was written by a defeated leader looking for a scapegoat.

Organizing the "official" version . . .

Ronald Searle, HBC Collection

As every policeman knows, few are less likely to agree than two eye-witnesses to the same event. Eye-witnesses, in fact, are notoriously unreliable and so it is a rule that no single account of anything should be taken as gospel without corroboration and careful scrutiny. Was the band on the *Titanic* playing "Nearer My God to Thee" or "Autumn" when the great ship went down? Did the fact that Napoleon had to stay near a latrine play a part in the outcome of the Battle of Waterloo or was it just an excuse devised by the French? Who fired the first shot at Seven Oaks? Eye-witnesses cannot agree.

Canadians were outraged recently when it was revealed that the British commander at the fall of Hong Kong had later filed a report placing much of the blame on Canadian "cowardice" in the face of the enemy. The Canadians, according to Major-General Christopher Maltby, who commanded from an underground bunker, lost their nerve as the Japanese

The search for historical truth is unending. Facts may be difficult to uncover; it may be impossible to tell the whole story exactly as it was; but enough emerges to create a general picture of the past and to draw conclusions from the lessons of history. Good history is neither "fables agreed upon" nor "Holy gospel". It is the best and most accurate recreation of time past that is possible given the limitations of human memory and imagination and the scarcity of conclusive evidence. In spite of these limitations, it is remarkable how much historians have uncovered through diligent exploration and analysis. They cannot make time past live again, but they can reveal much of what went before and how it continues to influence the living present. History is about us.

— Christopher Dafoe

WITH PADDLE AND CAMERA

The Past in Colour

The Northern Photographs of Prentice G. Downes

Introduced by R.H. Cockburn

Our photographic record of the North as it was before World War II appears almost exclusively in black and white, for colour film — Kodachrome — was not invented until 1935 and did not come into widespread use for some time thereafter. We are fortunate, therefore, that several hundred colour photographs taken by Prentice G. Downes during his northern journeys of 1939 and 1940 have been preserved.

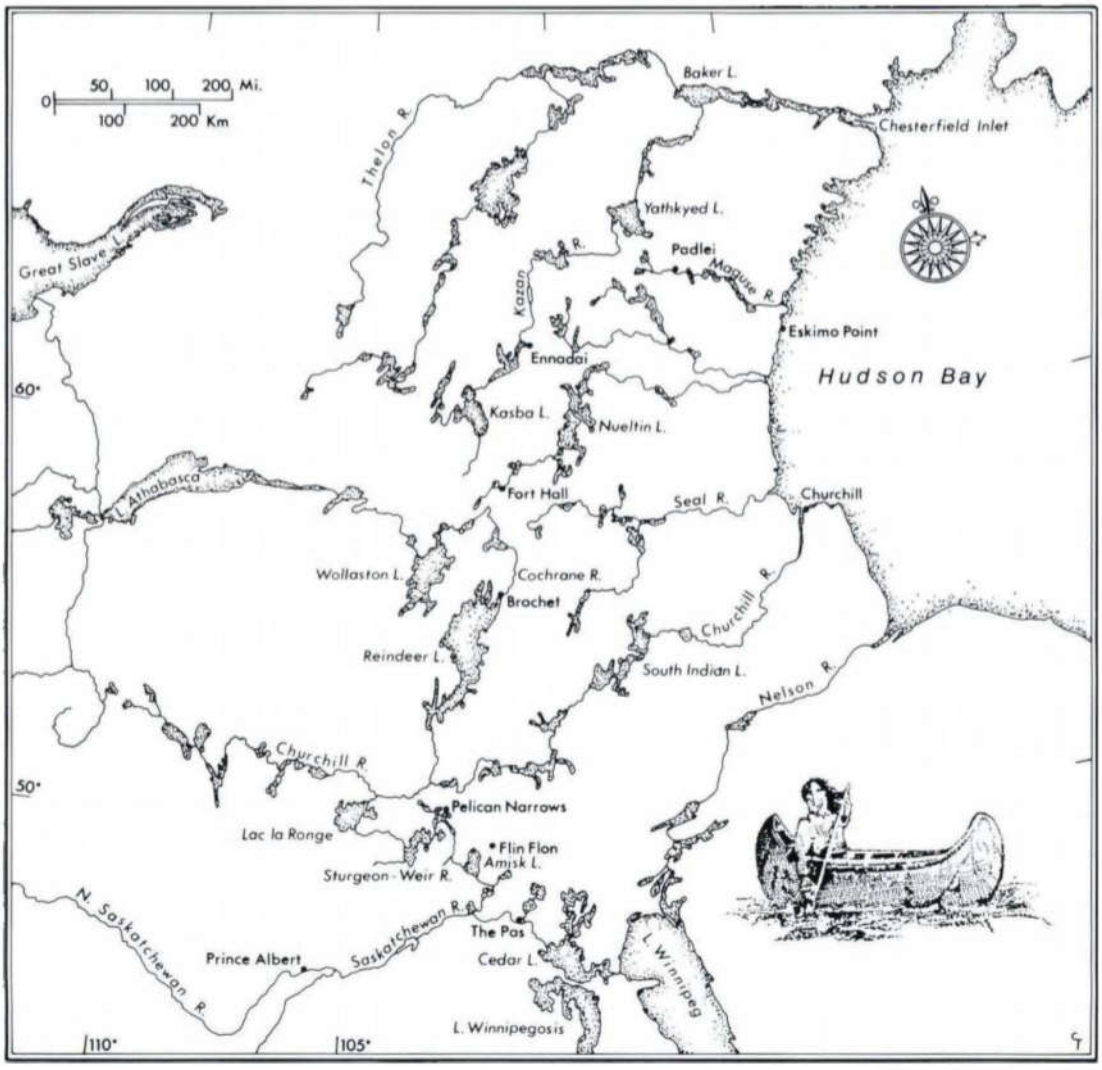
In the summer of 1939 Downes canoed with Crees from Pelican Narrows, Saskatchewan, up the Reindeer River to South End, where he took passage aboard the Hudson's Bay Company's vessel *Lac du Brochet* to Brochet, at the northern end of Reindeer Lake. His engrossing account of the journey that followed can be found in his book, *Sleeping Island* (1943/1988). In brief, he and a white trapper, John Albrecht, canoed from Brochet to the HBC's Nueltin Lake Post on the Windy River, NWT, their route taking them up the Cochrane, through the Little Lakes to Kasmere Lake, then down the Kasmere River to Nueltin Lake, where they fell in with Chipewyans who guided them to their destination. Albrecht returned alone to Brochet by canoe, while Downes eventually flew out to Churchill, then returned to Pelican and joined a Cree freighting party on a trip to Amisk Lake and back.

Downes's purpose the following summer was to find an Indian at Brochet who would canoe with him to the Kazan River, NWT. Having been flown from Flin Flon to a spot near Bear Island, Reindeer Lake, he paddled on to Brochet, only to discover that no native wished to make the trip he had in mind. He had to settle for another white companion, Alfred Peterson, a fifty-five-year-old trapper and former trader who was past his prime as a traveller. They hoped to make their way from Kasmere Lake up the Little Partridge River to Kasba Lake and the Kazan but were forced to turn back below Kasba Lake. That the return trip was not without its pleasures can be observed in certain of the photographs that follow. As in 1939, Downes concluded his summer portaging freight from Pelican Narrows to Amisk Lake.

The selection of photographs from 1939 and 1940 is accompanied by several from 1947, the last ever taken by Downes while "on the trail". The war had kept him from the North, and the impulse that brought him back was nostalgia: in his 1947 journal he confesses homesickness for both the Churchill River country and the Crees who had befriended him years before. Paddling solo, he travelled from Amisk Lake up the Sturgeon-Weir to Pelican Narrows, where he visited with many former companions before continuing on up the Churchill to Stanley — "altogether one of the prettiest spots I have seen in the North" — where he stayed for some days collecting Cree lore before leaving on the final part of this farewell journey, which ended at La Ronge. ◆

R.H. Cockburn is Professor of English at the University of New Brunswick, Fredericton, New Brunswick. He has written extensively on Northern travel. The photos are reproduced courtesy of Mrs. E.G. Downes.

Prentice G. Downes photographed by George M. Douglas, 1938.



Pelican Narrows, 1939.

Rocky Falls portage, Reindeer River, 30 June 1939.

Hudson's Bay Company motor vessel "Lac du Brochet" at Brochet.

Chipewyan camp, Misty Lake, Cochrane River, the main temporary campsite of the southbound Idthen-eldeli, 11 July 1939.

Paddling through the chain of Little Lakes on 15 July 1939 "we abruptly came upon two big canoes loaded with men & one woman, who had a baby in a moss bag. She was very ill-at-ease though she spoke good English. She said the deer would not be down 'til August."

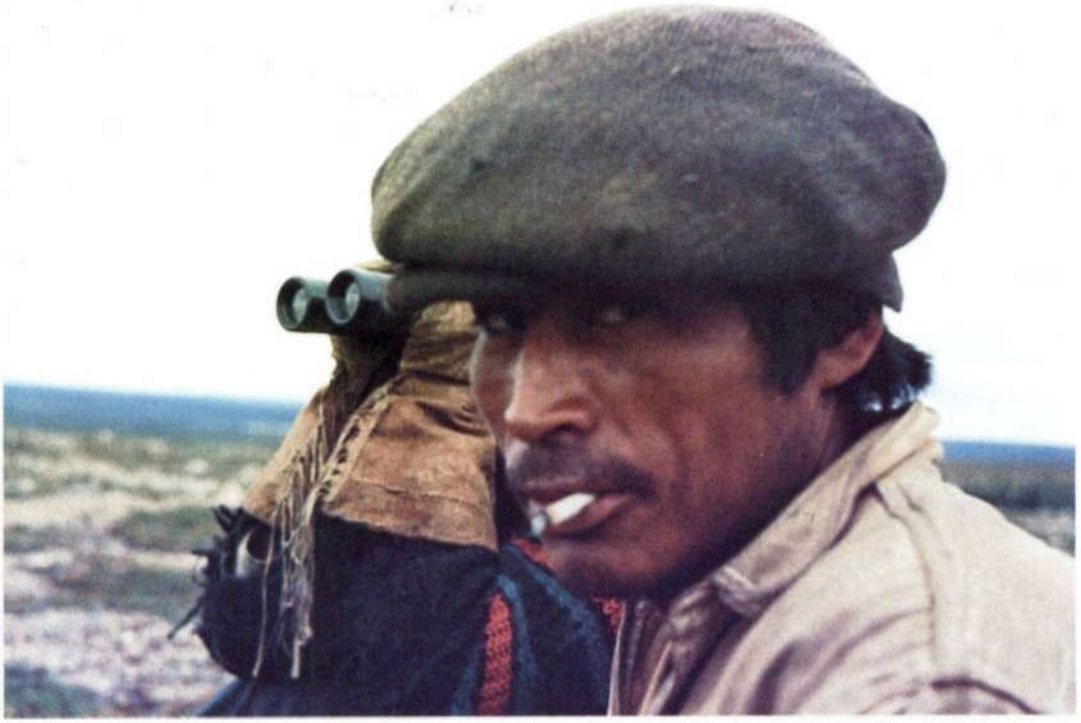
Entering Fort Hall Lake, 16 July.

The remains of the HBC"s Fort Hall outpost, built in 1908 and abandoned in the early 1920s. "It had fallen to rack and ruin . . . everywhere caribou bones. Up in back was a little graveyard with eleven graves." This relic of the old fur trade burned down in 1991.

John Albrecht posing with antlers, 19 July 1939. "During the morning we came upon the most enormous pair of caribou horns I have ever seen. I stopped and photographed these."

The HBC's Nueltin Lake Post at the confluence of the Windy and Red rivers; the Downes party arrived here at about midnight. The post was abandoned in 1941.

Camp of the Barrens Land Chipewyans at the mouth of the Putahow River, Nueltin Lake. "It was a big camp full of dogs, women — mostly — and children. I took a few pictures amidst all sorts of feminine chattering & laughing". It was here that Downes and John found two men willing to guide them, Lop-i-zun and Zah-hah-deese.



Za-bah-deese: "Within him seemed to burn a constant feverish flame of impatience, restlessness and search."

Alfred Peterson displays his Padleimuit wife's headwork, Brochet, 1940.

On the 29th and 30th of July 1940 Downes, who had camped below the first rapids on the Kasmere River, was rewarded by observing the southward migration of the Barren Land caribou. "I secreted myself in the willows along the shore and shot picture after picture. From my hideaway I got the deer just as they emerged from the water."

HBC Post, Pelican Narrows, photographed by Downes on another journey in 1947.

Stanley Mission, Churchill River. The Anglican church was built in the 1850s. Downes photographed it in 1947.

"One picture I took had Alfred holding up a big Chipewyan drum (they are single-headed and of deerskin.)" Another memory of the 1940 wanderings.

Modern Day Pioneers On the Trail of '74

By Marjorie Gillies

History is on the march in Western Canada as adventure-seekers and riding enthusiasts hit a 1,000-mile prairie trail first broken by buffalo migrating west to the Rockies, ancient Indian tribes and early fur traders.

Used by United States and Canadian Boundary Commission members in 1873 as they staked out the 49th parallel border between Canada and the U.S., the southern Manitoba portion of the trail became a natural choice for the first North West Mounted Police troops in 1874.

In the weeks between 8 July and 13 October that year, 318 NWMP officers and men appointed by the Canadian government relentlessly crossed grassland, coulees, rivers and bush to bring law and order to the West.

After 97 days on the trail 150 ragged horsemen under the command of Assistant-Commissioner James A. Macleod reached Fort Whoop-Up, the whisky-trading centre to which they had been sent to stop the sale of liquor.

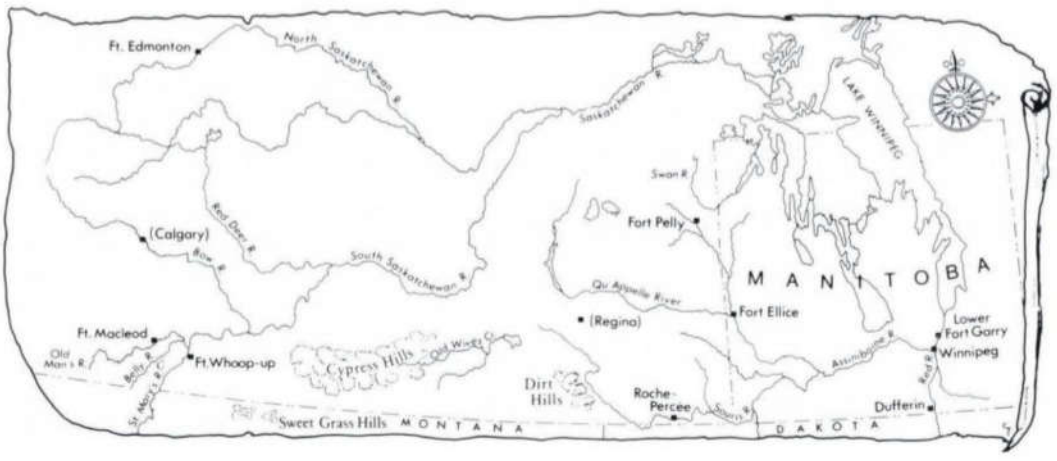
Three days later they settled in to build quarters in a curve of Oldman River, still known as Fort Macleod, near Lethbridge, Alberta.

At the same time, the remainder of the original force which had split up at Roche-Percée in mid-July, arrived in near-starving condition at Fort Edmonton.

Now the epic trek along a route nineteenth-century historians described as "the great highway of the southern portion of the British Dominion in the far West" has become a commemorative trail ride for hundreds of prairie farm and town folk anxious to recreate the momentous NWMP ride of 119 years ago.

Since 1991 more than 3,500 riders and wagoneers have joined in a ride of almost 400 miles, from Fort Dufferin, near Emerson, Manitoba, to Roche-Percée, in Saskatchewan, following the southern Border Commission route, to experience life as the West's earliest lawmakers and prairie pioneers knew it.

Most of them do it for fun, say Estevan residents Ken and Joyce Beggs, organizers of the 1993



Artist Henri Julien accompanied the police on their westward trek for "The Canadian Illustrated News" and left the only visual record of the journey. Here he depicts "A Lancer of the NWMP".

The first two Commissioners of the NWMP were G.A. French (left) and J.F. Macleod.

Photo by Dave Bonner

Led by Mounties in the pill-box caps of 1874, modern day trekkers follow the trail of '74.

Saskatchewan phase of a trek that expects to end at Fort Macleod by 1995.

For some the ride means touching base with family roots. For retired Manitoba farmers and horsemen Jim Wilson of Boissevain and Cam King of Killarney, descendants of pioneers who came West to farm in the 1880s, the trek is the fulfillment of a dream. With their wives, their children and grandchildren, they ride the trail in covered wagons, retracing a route that thousands took in search of a new life.

Back in 1874 Commissioner French recorded that his red-coated cavalcade swung into motion "to the accompaniment of bugle calls, cracking of whips and shrill shouts of command," a cacophony his officers, men and Métis guides probably found hard to distinguish over the shriek of ungreased wheels on the 114 Red River carts that hauled their provisions.

Besides the Red River carts and 20 Métis drivers were forges, threshing and milling machines, two nine-pounder muzzle-loading field guns, two brass mortars and several field kitchens to feed the hardy men and their mounts.

On 9 July 1991, it was "Wagons Ho!" for 14 wagons and 43 outriders setting out from Fort Dufferin on the 150-mile inaugural phase of the 1874 trail ride.

In her diary of the 1991 ride Olive Murray of Winlaw, Saskatchewan, tells of looking back from her "surrey with a fringe on top democrat" over "a mile-and-a-half-long string of wagons, buckboards, buggies and outriders."

Murray writes that everyone at the Fort Dufferin campsite "joined hands in brotherhood to create an ever increasing-sized circle" after Roseau River Band Indians presented a harmony dance at Fort Dufferin.

Today's trail ride includes amenities unknown to NWMP troops a century ago. The 1992 and 1993 treks include catered meals, served three times a day for $25 per person per day. Feed for horses, portable toilets, water wagons, horse vans and mobile homes are all in place.

Club liability insurance, definitely not part of the NWMP ride west, was added in 1992, increasing the 1993 registration fee to $15 per person and $25 a family joining the trek for the entire distance or a few miles. In 1991, the fee was $5 a person and $10 a family.

Life was never easy for NWMP troops who lived on military rations. Due to drought and prairie fire, the Red Coats dealt constantly with water shortages and lack of feed for their horses.

Yet many of the qualities that Commissioner George A. French sought in his men remain advantageous to those who like to rough it on the trail in the 1990s. French advertised for "active, able-bodied men of thoroughly sound constitution and exemplary character." Today, stamina and horse sense are still assets

Photo by Dave Bonner

The journey of 1874 was far less comfortable without rubber-tired wagons and smooth roads.

for travelling the 15 to 20 miles a day. And while the buffalo have vanished from the plains, hordes of mosquitoes, grasshoppers, drenching downpours interspersed with periods of intense heat and cool night temperatures remain common to summer in Manitoba through to the foothills of Alberta. At night, the eerie howls of coyotes and wolves still drift across campsites.

Trekkers in the '90s take to the camaraderie, the renewal of the old spirit of the West, the sense of adventure in doing something totally unrelated to work or home.

Leading the trail ride out of Fort Dufferin that July day in 1991 were RCMP Sergeant Cliff McGregor and Corporal Patrick Dauk clad in duplicated NWMP uniforms including the little pill-box hat, red serge tunic and fawn riding breeches.

Olive Murray draws on her personal observations of daily events to create a sense of drama, excitement and commitment on the trail.

From her buggy seat, she was part of a crowd of women gowned in pioneer dress with traditional bonnets, shawls and parasols. Men on horseback donned dandified brocade vests of the era, fringed leather voyageur garb or tall cowboy hats and jeans.

Near Mather, Manitoba, she writes, riders splashed "through sloughs, dodged poplar bluffs and enjoyed the sweet fragrance of clover and wild purple sage."

Adding historic reality to the 10-day ride of 1991 were descendants of the intrepid men who called the plains their home in the 1870s. People like retired RCMP officer Dominique French, a great-grandson of the first NWMP Commissioner who led the first contingent of Red Coats westward.

Métis guide William Hallett's granddaughter Dorothy Hallet Pratt from the Sioux Valley reserve near Griswold and two great-great-grandchildren, Rysleah and Aurora Price of Winnipeg, rode the trail.

Aime St. Vincent of St. Anne., a ninth generation descendant of Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, Sieur de LaVerendrye, joined in the 1991 trek west.

Plans are now in the works to designate the trail area as a Heritage Canada Region and to gain support from federal, provincial and municipal governments to make the trek an annual summer project.

Town and farm residents along the U.S. border in Manitoba are currently studying a proposal to fund the project through municipal levies.

Rosemary Malaher, Manitoba Governor of Heritage Canada and former executive director of the Manitoba Historical Society, predicts the ride can revitalize the ecology, culture, economics and lifestyle of Western Canada.

Both Malaher and Felix Kuehn, Executive Director of the Boundary Commission/NWMP Trail Associ-

The mountains are in view and the long journey nearly over in this 1874 drawing by artist Henri Julien.

ation in 1991 and 1992, are positive the trek has potential as a major adventure tour.

Positive steps toward the project's future success were taken by Heritage Canada in July 1992 with the posting of signs by the Boundary Commission/NWMP Trail Association along provincial highways adjacent to the original route. The first sign was erected in 1991 at Clearwater, the only remaining original townsite on the trail.

The signs, as well as the flags that costumed RCMP carry on the ride each July, show NWMP Commissioner George Arthur French meeting with William Hallett, Métis scout, hunter and fur trader who served as chief guide for the Boundary Commission in 1873.

In Estevan, Saskatchewan, a committee is making plans for the next phase of the trek to Coronach for 1993. Sixty dedicated riders and wagoneers from the 1991 trek and another 200 newly registered wagoneers and outriders will leave Roche-Percée early in July, 1993. The route will pass through farmland and ranches bordering Outram, Torquay and Minton to alkaline-dusted Big Muddy country.

For Ruth Dickson, of Boissevain, "feeling like a pioneer" after only one day on the trail in 1992 is enough reason to head out each year to reach Fort Macleod.

As incentive for the holiday of a lifetime, this mix of history, horses and adventure appears to be irresistible to anyone looking for a challenge.

For more information on the 1993 Boundary Commission/NWMP trail ride, which will leave Roche-Percée on 11 July 1993 and end in southern Saskatchewan "Big Muddy country", write to Kenn Beggs, Box 604, Estevan, Saskatchewan, S4A 2A5. An update on ride plans in 1993 in Manitoba is available from the Boundary Commission/NWMP Trail, 28 Morley Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3L 0X4. ♦

Marjorie Gillies is a Winnipeg writer. Colour photographs of the trek are by Winnipeg photographer Dave Bonner.

Damp dawn mists swirled around the darkened huts of the sleeping Indian village, water drums and turtleshell rattles now lying silent on the ground where the exhausted revellers had let them fall. A soft-spoken command: a long line of men in torn and sodden green uniforms rose up as one and moved stealthily forward, bayonets fixed and tomahawks drawn. In an instant, Rogers' Rangers fell upon the Indian cabins with a vengeance, their war whoops and the victims' surprised voices mingling in a crescendo of musketry and confused fighting.

A few of the Abeneki warriors escaped to the river and took to canoes. Forty rangers had been detailed to cut off such a line of retreat. Muskets roared out from the shore and the canoes overturned in the pewter-grey waters of the St. Francis River. In the village some Abeneki made half-hearted resistance from their log cabins. Rangers encircled them and tossed torches onto the roofs. Death chants rose from occupants trapped inside the burning pyres and others were slain as they tried to dart to freedom.

As the pale sun came up, all resistance had ceased and Robert Rogers paraded his men and took stock. One of his own Indians was dead and a Ranger officer seriously wounded. The enemy's casualties were estimated at between 200 and 250. The settlement of St. Francis was now a smoking ruin, except for the Abeneki's scalp-festooned poles that remained standing, a grisly reminder to each and every Ranger of the purpose of the raid. The St. Francis Indians had lived by the musket and tomahawk, and they died — men, women, and children — as they had lived.

Buckskin Soldier

The Rise and Fall of Major Robert Rogers

By IAN McCULLOCH

Of all the buckskinned soldiers to walk through the pages of North American history, perhaps none is more enigmatic than Major Robert Rogers. A household word in his day, Rogers led his famous colonial Rangers during the French and Indian War, 1755-1763 (also known as The Seven Years War).

Rogers the frontiersman was rediscovered by a world audience in the twentieth century when he was immortalized in Kenneth Roberts' best-selling novel *Northwest Passage*. At the height of his career, Rogers seemed destined for legendary greatness alongside such famous fighters as Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett. But he fought for the "wrong side" in the American Revolution and fell victim to a series of unfortunate circumstances.

Robert Rogers had a challenging boyhood growing up on the New Hampshire frontier. Born on 7 November 1731 to Irish immigrant parents, James and Mary Rogers, his family endured many hardships. Many years later at a London dinner party, Rogers won first prize "for telling the most unlikely story": the true tale of how his father was shot and killed in the woods of America by a person who mistook him for a bear and how his mother barely survived after being tracked for several miles by hunters who thought she was a moose.

From the time he was fourteen, Rogers' rural home near Rumsford (now Concord, New Hampshire) was subject to frequent hit-and-run attacks by French-led Indians. By 1745, raiders were a constant menace, fanning out from St. Frederic, France's stone fort at Crown Point on Lake Champlain. Other war parties came overland from St. Francis, Quebec. Thus, the education alluded to in Rogers' *Journals*, first published in London in 1765, included "the hardy by-play of war" and a detailed knowledge of the manners, customs and the language of the Indians who lived locally.

His *Journals* also confessed to an irrepressible urge to know what lay beyond New Hampshire's White Mountains. Through constant interrogation of hunters, and others who illegally traded with the French, Rogers soaked up information on "the uncultivated desert" that lay between New England and New

Major Robert Rogers of Rogers' Rangers presents a formidable appearance in this contemporary portrait.

France. Soon he had a vast map in his head of the uninhabited valleys, passes, lakes, rivers and mountains of what now constitutes New York State, New Hampshire and Vermont.

Not enamoured with the prospect of farming like his father, the adventurous Rogers took to patrolling the frontier as a militiaman and working on several survey parties charting tracts of wilderness along the Connecticut River. By all accounts, Rogers was a rugged individual who adapted easily to the rigours of outdoor life. John Stark, who fought as one of Rogers' Rangers and later became an American Revolutionary War general, pictured him as "six feet in stature, well-proportioned and one of the most athletic men of his time — well known in all trials of strength or activity among the young men . . . for many miles around." Stark also attributed to his leader "great presence of mind, intrepidity, perseverance and . . . a plausible address".

The only engraved full-length portrait of Rogers was published in London in 1776. He is represented as a tall, strong man, in keeping with Stark's description. Rogers is dressed in the costume of a Ranger, with a powder horn slung at his side, a musket resting in the hollow of his arm, and several Indians behind him in the distance, symbolic perhaps of the forest-fighting tactics that Rogers adopted and put to use with such good effect.

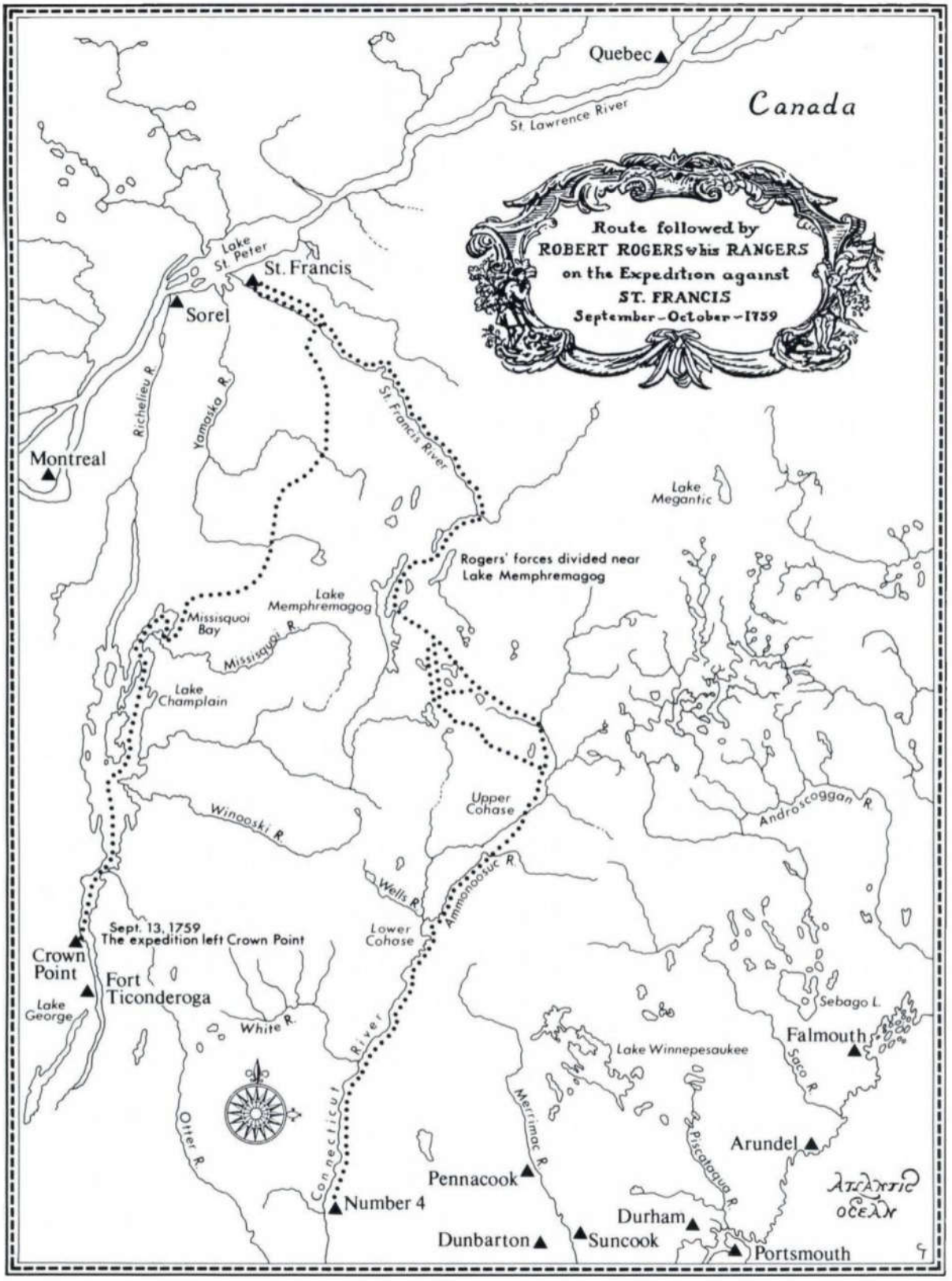
The French and Indian War was fought principally in the mountainous region surrounding the beautiful lake and river systems of Lake Champlain, Lake George and the Richelieu River, a contiguous waterway connecting New York with Montreal. It was here that Rogers as a captain in a New Hampshire provincial regiment first made his mark.

The commander of British forces on Lake George in 1755 was William Johnson, Superintendant of the Six Nations Indians, charged with attacking Fort Carillon (Ticonderoga), the most southerly of France's forts on Lake Champlain. Smarting from an unsuccessful surprise attack on his camp by the French general Baron Dieskau, Johnson was wavering in proceeding with his principal mission. His normally faithful Mohawk scouts had inexplicably deserted him and Johnson desperately needed information as to what French and Indian forces still remained to the north in and around Ticonderoga and St. Frederic. He turned to Rogers' commanding officer, asking if he knew of any men of scouting ability who could determine the enemy's actual strength. Colonel Blanchard's recommendation was immediate: Robert Rogers was the man for the job.

Several daring scouts later, Rogers had provided the proof Johnson needed to convince his superiors that French regulars and Indian allies were sufficiently strong to repel any strike northwards by his small and inexperienced provincial force. Rogers' scouting missions full of action and adventure made him the camp hero, one of the only soldiers in the small army carrying the war to the French in an otherwise lacklustre campaign. Provincial newspapers praised his exploits.

Johnson's force was disbanded in late fall 1755, except for 750 men left to garrison Fort Edward on the Hudson River and the uncompleted Fort William Henry on the south shore of Lake George. Robert Rogers was one of those who remained behind, named as captain of the New Hampshire contingent.

The following spring, after more heroics in the dead of winter, the popular Rogers was commissioned by William Shirley, the nominal Commander-in-Chief of the British Army in North America, to raise "an Independent Company of Rangers". Rogers' mission would be "to make Discoveries of the proper Routes for our own Troops, procure Intelligence of the Enemy's Strength and Motions, destroy (French) out Magazines and Settlements, pick up small Parties of their Battoes upon the Lakes, and keep them under continual alarm. . . ." For this purpose he was authorized to enlist 60 specially-chosen privates, proficient in hunting and tracking, three sergeants, one ensign and two lieutenants. Soon his command swelled to nine inde-


Quebec
Canada
St. Lawrence River
Route followed by
ROBERT ROGERS & his RANGERS
on the Expedition against
ST. FRANCIS
September - October - 1759
Lake St. Peter
St. Francis
Sorel
Richelieu R.
Yamaska R.
St. Francis River
Montreal
Lake Megantic
Rogers' forces divided near Lake Memphremagog
Lake Memphremagog
Missisquoi Bay
Missisquoi R.
Lake Champlain
Upper Cohase
Androscoggan R.
Winooski R.
Wells R.
Ammonoosuc R.
Lower Cohase
Sept. 13, 1759
The expedition left Crown Point
Crown Point
Fort Ticonderoga
Lake George
White R.
Sebago L.
Falmouth
Lake Winnepesaukee
Saco R.
Connecticut River
Merrimac R.
Piscataqua R.
Arundel
Otter R.
Pennacook
Number 4
Durham
Dunbarton
Suncook
Portsmouth
ATLANTIC OCEAN

David M. Stewart Museum

Iroquois Warrior: Two of Rogers' nine Ranger companies were made up entirely of Indians. The Iroquois were among the first Indians to use muskets in North America, bought from Dutch or English traders in the late seventeenth century.

pendent companies, formed loosely into a provisional battalion with Rogers as Major Commandant.

Rogers' Rangers' fame carried across the sea to England in letters and newspapers of the day. His forays not only constituted the sole offensive action being taken by the British army against the French in North America, but struck a romantic chord in the public's imagination. In 1851 American historian Francis Parkman revived the romance:

> In summer, [Rogers' Rangers] passed down [Lake George] in whale-boats or canoes, or threaded the pathways of the woods in single file, like the savages themselves. In winter, they journeyed through the swamps on snow-shoes, skated along the frozen surface of the lake, and bivouacked at night among the snow-drifts. They intercepted French messengers, encountered French scouting parties, and carried off prisoners from under the very walls of Ticonderoga. Their hardships and adventures, their marches and countermarches, their frequent skirmishes and mid-winter battles . . . made them famous throughout America.

Rogers' most famous attack was the one recounted in Roberts' *Northwest Passage* and later the subject of a Spencer Tracy movie: the St. Francis Raid of 1759. On 13 September, the same day that Wolfe faced Montcalm on the Plains of Abraham, Rogers was ordered by General Jeffrey Amherst to:

> . . . proceed this night . . . to Missiquey Bay, from whence you will march and attack the enemy's settlements on the south-side of the river St. Lawrence in such a manner as you shall judge most effectual . . . Remember the barbarities committed by the enemy's Indian scoundrels on every occasion, where they had an opportunity of shewing their infamous cruelties on the King's subjects, which they have done without mercy. Take your revenge, but don't forget: tho' those villains have dastardly and promiscuously murdered the women and children of all ages, it is my order that no women or children are to be killed or hurt . . .

Rogers' Rangers needed no reminding. The Indians of St. Francis were the self-same Abenekis and renegades that had scourged the villages and hamlets of New England for three generations. Rogers' men set out eagerly to settle old scores.

Two hundred and twenty Rangers launched their whale boats from Crown Point, successfully negotiating Lake Champlain, bypassing and eluding numerous French boats and patrols (an adventure in itself of ten days' duration). Rogers' force landed at Missisquoi Bay, hid their boats and sufficient provisions for their return journey, then struck overland through spruce swamps and thick virgin wilderness for St. Francis. The settlement was a distance of some 130 kilometres as the crow flies (near present-day Drummondville, Quebec).

On the evening of the second day, two of Rogers' men left behind to watch the hidden boats caught up with the main force and reported breathlessly to Rogers. A force of 400 Frenchmen had found, then burned their boats and spare provisions. Even worse, over 200 of the enemy were now in hot pursuit. Rogers described his predicament in his *Journals:*

> This unlucky circumstance put us in some consternation. Being so far advanced in [French] country, where no reinforcement could possibly relieve me, and where they could be supported by any numbers they pleased, afforded us little hopes of escaping at their hands. Our boats being taken, cut off all hope of retreat by them; besides the loss of our provisions left with them, of which we knew we should have great need at any rate, in case we survived, was a melancholy consideration. . . .

Rogers put on a bold face and resolved to outmarch his pursuers, attack St. Francis before they could

receive warning of his approach, then return to New England via Lake Memphremagog and the Connecticut River. He sent a Ranger officer back to General Amherst with a request that provisions be sent up the Connecticut to meet him on the way down, "that being the way I shall return, if at all. . . ."

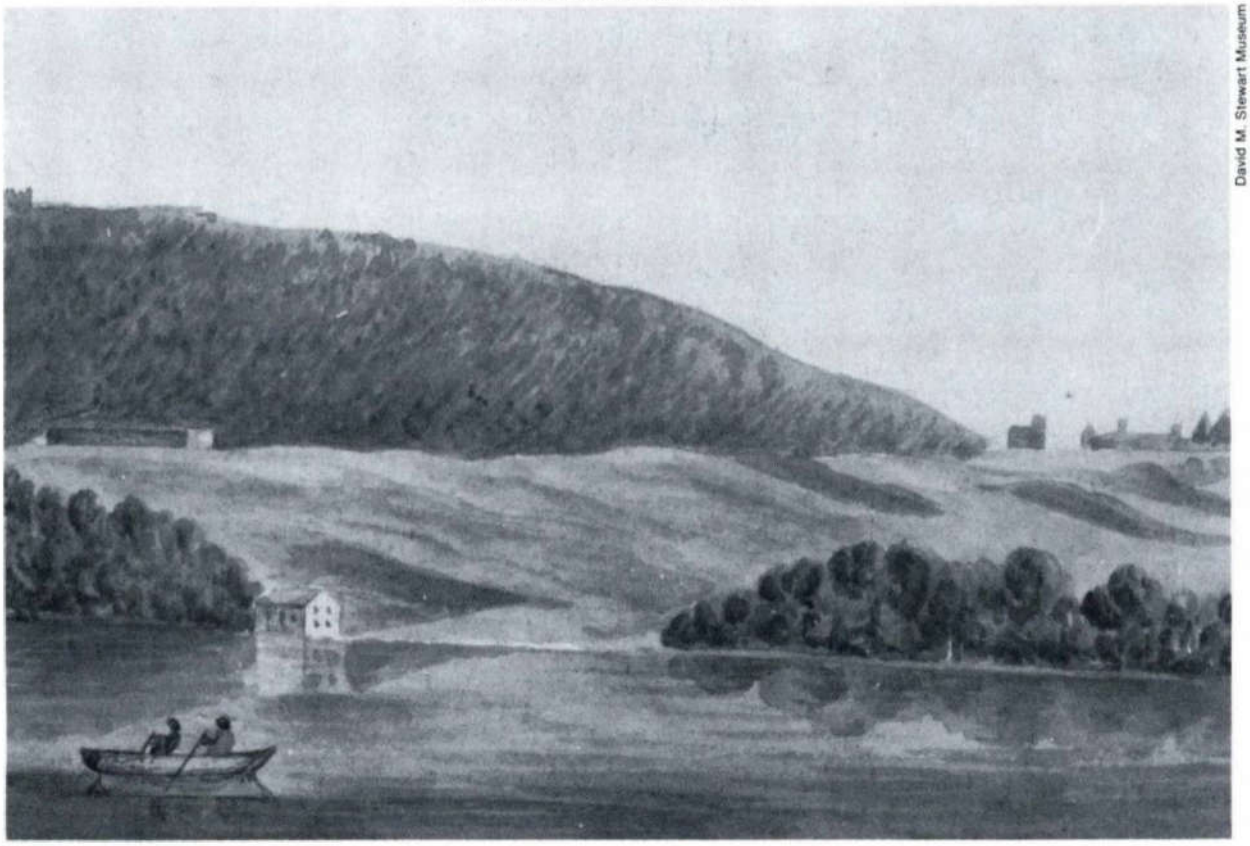
For nine backbreaking days, Rogers' Rangers marched through boggy, thick terrain with a desperate energy. They reached the St. Francis River fifteen miles above their objective and by hooking their arms together for mutual support, forded it with extreme difficulty. After a quick scout to determine if the enemy was alerted to their presence, Rogers' tiny force struck hard in the hours before dawn on 6 October and burned out the hornets' nest. He wrote:

> About seven o'clock in the morning the affair was completely over, in which time we had killed at least two hundred Indians and taken 20 of their women and children prisoners, fifteen of whom I let go their own way, and five I brought with me, namely two Indian boys and three Indian girls. I likewise retook five English captives.

Rogers was told by his prisoners that 300 Frenchmen and Indians were encamped at the mouth of the St. Francis and another party of 200 waited at Yamaska, both on the lookout for his force. Rogers' Rangers made all haste southward, taking as much of the village's corn supply as they could carry. Near the eastern shore of Lake Memphremagog their supplies ran out and Rogers split his force into small hunting bands in order to better live off the land. The enemy was close behind and soon fell on a band of about 20 Rangers under Lieutenants Dunbar and Turner, killing both officers and ten men. The remainder escaped. Starvation, however, was a spectre more menacing than the pursuing Indians and French. Thomas Mante, a contemporary British regular officer who later wrote a history of the war in North America, recorded the story of Lieutenant George Campbell's group of Rangers — and by doing so told the story of them all:

> Some of [Campbell's party] in consequence of their complicated misery, severely aggravated by their not knowing whither the route they pursued would lead, and, of course, the little prospect of relief that was left them, lost their senses; whilst others, who could no longer bear the keen pangs of an empty stomach, attempted to eat their own excrements. What leather they had on their cartouche-boxes, had already been

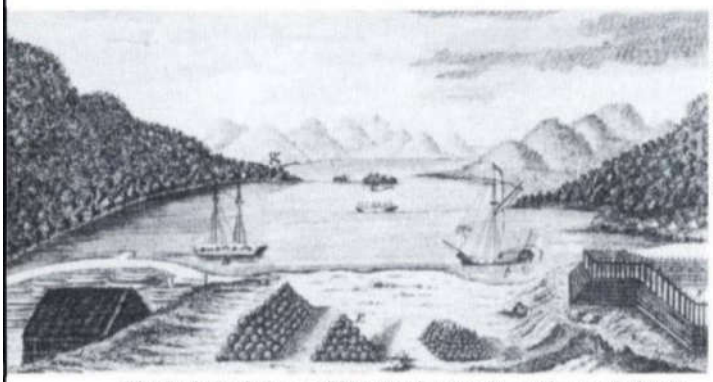
Fort Ticonderoga, 1759, a watercolour by an unknown British officer. A whaleboat of the type used by Rogers heads northeast up Lake Champlain. The fort is on the far left while a breastwork commands the most easterly tip on the ridge at right. A small blockhouse is just visible on Mt. Defiance, the large hill to left rear.



David M. Stewart Museum

reduced to a cinder and greedily devoured. At length, on the 28th of October, as they were crossing a small river, which was in some measure dammed up by logs, they discovered some human bodies, not only scalped but horribly mangled, which they supposed to be some of their own party. But this was not a season for distinctions. On them, accordingly, they fell like Cannibals, and devoured part of them raw; their impatience being too great to wait the kindling of a fire to dress it by. When they had thus abated the excruciating pangs they before had endured, they carefully collected the fragments and carried them off. This was their sole support, except roots and a squirrel, till the 4th of November when Providence conducted them to a boat on the Connecticut River, which Major Rogers had sent with provisions to their relief.

Most bands eluded their pursuers and arrived at the mouth of the Ammonoosuc on the Connecticut, giddy



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The Cockpit of War: A 1759 print showing the southern end of Lake George as Robert Rogers would have seen it.

with fatigue and hunger. To Rogers' horror, the place where he had specifically requested Amherst to send provisions was deserted — "It is hardly possible to describe our grief and consternation". To make matters worse, there were evident signs indicating that someone had been waiting for them. In fact, Amherst had sent a certain Lieutenant Stephens upriver with an abundant food supply to await the Rangers at the river junction. Stephens however had got cold feet and had only waited two days before returning to the safety of Fort Number Four. He took the vital provisions with him. For his cowardly conduct, Stephens was cashiered. Rogers himself found an inner well of strength to go on, promising to send his men relief within ten days. He made a pine log raft with the help of three others and reached Number Four five days later. He was true to his word. Though the raid itself cost Rogers only one man killed, the retreat from St. Francis claimed the lives of three officers and forty-six men. Amherst was glad to get Rogers back from St. Francis and praised him warmly and assured him of his "satisfaction" and "full approbation". New England hailed Rogers as a hero and great leader.

Until the end of the war in 1760, Rogers' Rangers continued to carry out scouting and skirmishing duties for the British army. Six of his nine companies had served with Wolfe at Quebec, one of the companies commanded by his younger brother, James.

It was at this time, however, that Rogers began to run afoul of the Quarter-Master and Judge-Advocate General of the Army in settling his battalion accounts. Rogers might have been a great leader with an independent command, but he was a hopeless administrator — a raw recruit when dealing with the bewildering array of paperwork demanded of him by the burgeoning bureaucracy of the British Army. Amherst tried to help him and Rogers finally got most of his accounts in order. Those that remained, however, plus an unfortunate loss of personal cash and soldiers' pay during enemy action near Crown Point, left Rogers financially insecure and hounded by creditors for the rest of his life.

The French surrender of New France in 1760 included the surrender of western posts at Michilimackinac, Detroit and elsewhere — a tract of Canada to which no British force had ever dared venture. The route from Montreal was known to be dangerous and the Indians hostile. There was also uncertainty as to whether the French fort commandants would recognize the surrender at Montreal. Amherst did not hesitate in his choice of a leader to carry the British colours to the gates of the West. Robert Rogers was given his final mission as the Commandant of the Rangers. Biographer John Cuneo in his book, *Robert Rogers of the Rangers*, marked this as an important turning point in Rogers' career:

> The assignment offered Rogers a new lease of life. Five years of war had brought no permanent rank. Peace meant the dissolution of the rangers corps and with that the end of his career. He could not even look forward to retirement pay allowed regular officers. His service had involved him in debt; creditors were pressing him closely. But Montreal was buzzing with gossip: fortune awaited the first men arriving at the French posts. Furs stacked skyhigh could be bought for farthings. The golden lure of the West now beckoned.

Rogers executed his appointed task with his customary zeal and leadership and was rewarded by his friend Amherst with the command of South Carolina's Independent Company in 1761. Ill health brought on by the southern climate forced Rogers to relinquish this command however, but not before a fateful meeting with the Governor of North Carolina, Arthur Dobbs.

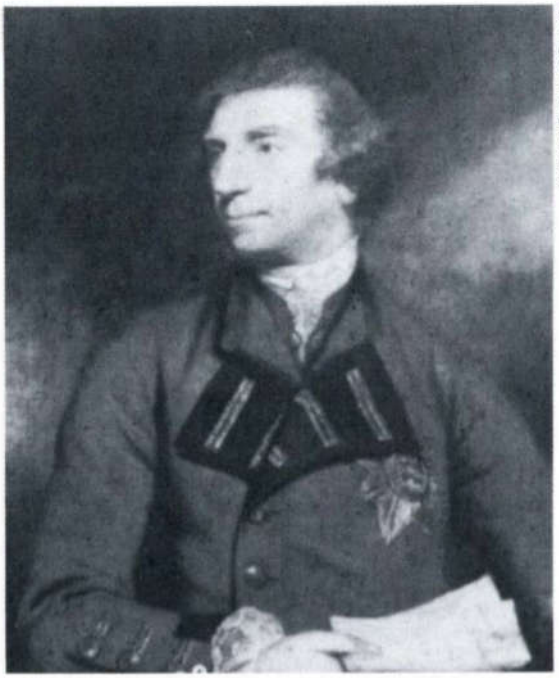
The 72-year-old Governor convinced Rogers that there was a water passage around or through the northern end of North America to the Pacific — the famous Northwest Passage. Dobbs had sent out an expedition to Hudson Bay in 1741, the supposed eastern end of the passage. When the search failed, Dobbs blamed the Hudson's Bay Company for obstruction, claiming that they were afraid that his enterprise would succeed and endanger their fur monopoly. His last salvo appeared in a pamphlet:

> . . . after so many Years Trouble and Attendance at a great Expence to [my] Private Fortune, and Loss to [my] Family, . . . [I] retire and leave the Prosecution of the Discovery of the Passage and the Extension of the British trade to some more happy Adventurer.

Rogers became that "Adventurer", but he was never the "happy" one that Dobbs envisaged. Neither was he in a position to search or launch an expedition for another five years. Rogers went north on the outbreak of Pontiac's Uprising in 1763, a furious attack by the western Indians on all the frontier forts formerly under French control. Most fell swiftly to surprise attacks, including Fort Michilimackinac in a massacre vividly recorded by an eye-witness, fur trader Alexander Henry. Detroit, Niagara, and Fort Pitt held out, though all three were subjected to vigorous siege. Rogers, despatched to the aid of Detroit, fought in several bloody engagements, his last against Indians.

The end of the uprising saw Rogers returning to the unhappy domestic prospect of fighting off the same-old creditors. To make matters worse, his old friend and ally, General Jeffrey Amherst, was replaced by an old rival and bitter enemy, Major-General Thomas Gage. The new Commander, years before as a Colonel, had tried (unsuccessfully) to have his regiment, Gage's Light Infantry, replace Rogers' elite Rangers during the war. One of Gage's first acts of revenge and malice was to have Amherst's recommendations for Rogers' payment for services at Detroit deferred.

In an effort to secure redress for his unpaid accounts, Rogers travelled to England to make a direct appeal to the War Office. To attract attention to himself and remind the English public of his wartime record, he did the accepted thing of the day. He wrote two books, published at his own expense: *The Journals of Major Robert Rogers*, chronicling his adventures from September 1755 to January 1761; and a second more popular companion volume, *A Concise Account of North America*, in which he described his dream of opening up the vast and rich hinterlands of the North American continent. The books' popularity, combined with a story of his prowess in the single-handed capture of a highwayman, brought celebrity status. His portrait in full Ranger uniform adorned the windows of



National Gallery of Canada

General Jeffrey Amherst, patron to Robert Rogers.

Arthur Dobbs, Governor of North Carolina, 1754-65.

Duke University Library

the printshops causing one of his patrons to chuckle, "Major Rogers marches thro' the prints in a thousand various Shapes". His picture was even reproduced in Germany.

Rogers soon attracted the patronage and favour of the King, having appeared for a wager at the King's Levee dressed in his Ranger buckskins. Rogers lobbied for and received the coveted appointment of Commandant of Fort Michilimackinac, a strategic fur post at the junctures of Lakes Michigan and Huron. His eagerness for the job stemmed from the fact it would place him in the ideal position to facilitate his search for the fabled Passage. As the potential Superintendant of the Western Indians (a title he was never accorded), he imagined himself being able to question the Western tribes on its exact whereabouts.

This present-day cap badge of the Queen's York Rangers, one of Canada's oldest militia units, commemorates the American Loyalist unit, the Queen's American Rangers, first raised by Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Rogers in 1776.

Triumphant, Rogers returned to British North America, unaware of the extreme rancour and jealousy he had stirred up with General Gage and Sir William Johnson, his old commander of Lake George days, now Superintendant of all Northern Indians. Gage wrote a confidential letter to Johnson denouncing Rogers:

> He is wild, vain, of little understanding, and of as little Principle, but withal has a share of Cunning, no Modesty or veracity and sticks at Nothing. Be So good to Send me your Advice in what manner he may be best tied up with Instructions and prevented doing Mischief and imposing on you.

Together, they schemed to frustrate Rogers at every turn. Johnson, ever-protective of his status, replied that Gage should instruct Rogers to take orders regarding Indian affairs directly from himself, outline clearly the channels for doing so and place a severe limitation on Rogers as to what presents he could distribute to the Indians. Gage agreed and added that Rogers should be placed under close surveillance at all times. All officers proceeding to Michilimackinac were thus instructed to report back on all aspects of Rogers' behaviour. Detailed steps were being taken to engineer Rogers' fall.

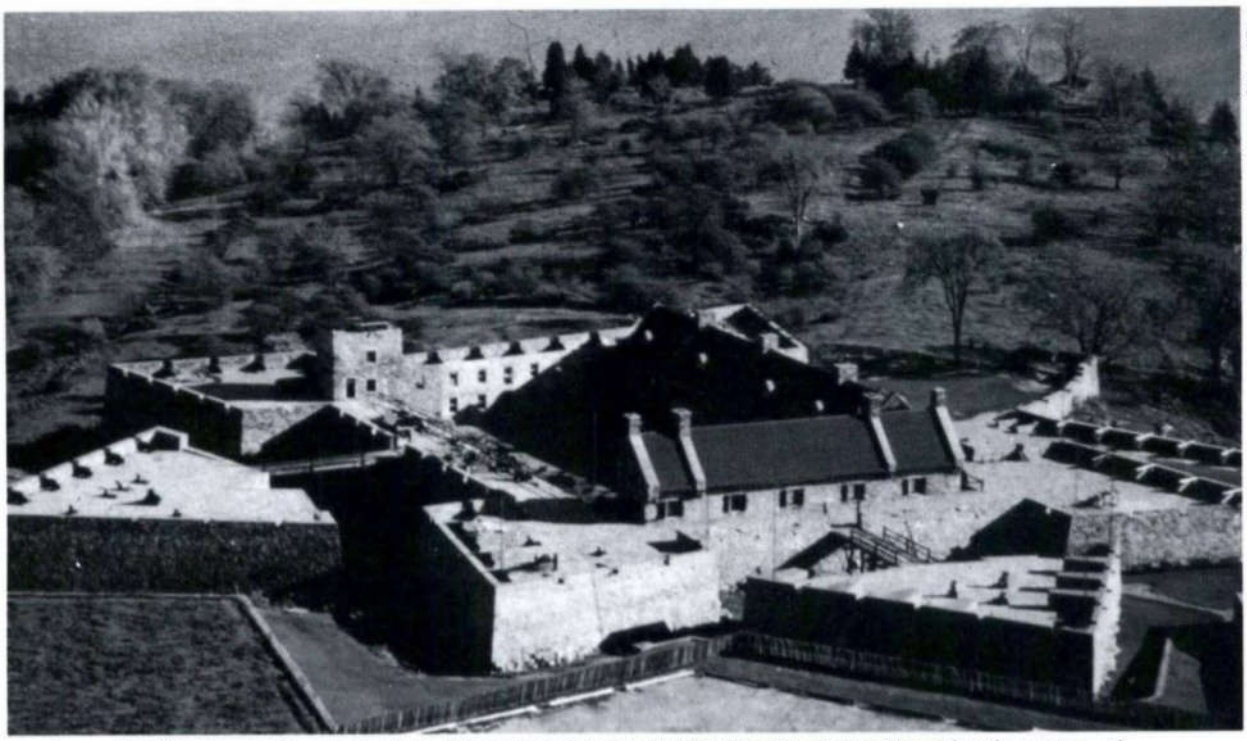
The unheeding Rogers wasted little time after his arrival at Michilimackinac in putting together his expedition to find the Passage. He gave a former Ranger captain, James Tute, nominal command and explicit instructions on where to go. Tute's mission was to discover the Passage "if any such Passage there be" or failing that, "find the great River Ourigon that falls into the Passific Ocean about the Latitude Fifty." Rogers instructed him to follow the old trade route from Michilimackinac along the northern shore of Michigan, up the Fox River and thence by portage over to the Wisconsin River to winter at Prairie du Chien. There he was to be joined in the spring by a 56-year-old New England cartographer, Jonathan Carver, then proceed westwards.

On Tute's departure, Rogers turned to his principal work at Michilimackinac with a relish. He wrote:

> The Command was of a nice and Critical nature. I was not only to hold the Ballance of Justice between His Majesty's Subjects and the Savages, but likewise to preserve Harmony and Peace between the different Nations of Savages, whose perpetual broils were obstructive of Trade: Moreover I Had to Govern a Garrison of His Majesty's Officers and Soldiers with a great number of English as well as The lately Conquered French Traders and Inhabitants, whose different Interests Diametrically clashed with each other.

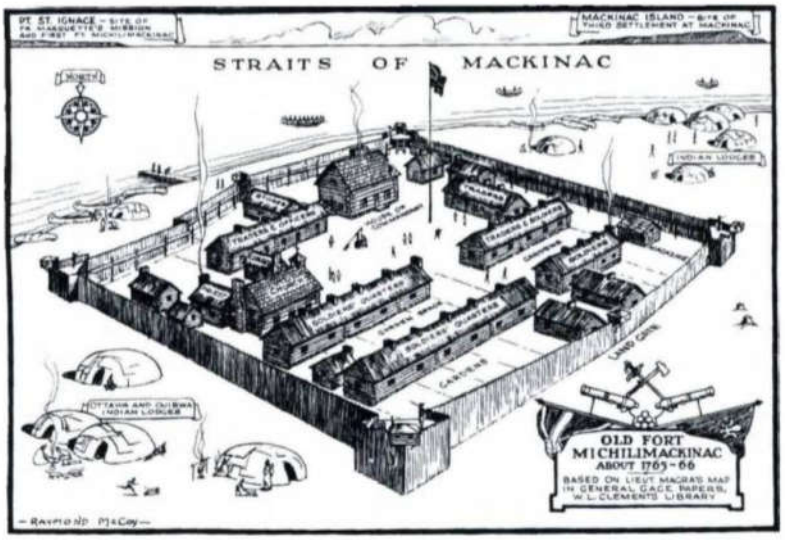
As Rogers performed his duties however, two larger and intricately entwined forces were at work behind the scenes to remove him from command: the web of hatred and conspiracy being spun by Gage and Johnson and the invisible but powerful interests battling for control of the fur trade of North America. Montreal-based fur traders had set up a powerful lobby in London to counter Johnson and the New York merchants moving in on their territory. Rogers sided with the Montreal faction and wrote a lengthy memorandum in 1767 proposing the creation of a new colony centred on Michilimackinac. Immodestly, he concluded that he would be the best-placed servant of the King to act as its first colonial Governor. The Montreal fur traders to a man signed a letter backing Rogers' proposal, the list of their signatures a rollcall of names famous in the annals of the Northwest fur trade: Alexander Henry, James Finlay, Isaac Todd, Ezekiel Solomon, Gershom Levy, Henry Bostwick, John Chinn, Forrest Oakes and James McGill.

By the time the proposal reached London, however, the net of Gage and Johnson had already descended



Fort Ticonderoga Museum/Richard Dean

Fort Ticonderoga. The most southerly of France's stone forts (called "Carillon" by the French) guarding the entrance and portage at the southern tip of Lake Champlain. It fell to Amherst in 1759.



An imaginary drawing of Fort Michilimackinac based on an authentic map and the description of the English fur trader Alexander Henry. This is as Rogers may have seen it.

and Rogers was under close arrest for high treason. Rogers faced court martial on 20 October 1768 in Montreal after eleven soul-destroying months in iron shackles and close confinement ordered by Gage. During Rogers' incarceration, Johnson and Gage contacted everyone they knew and made every effort to support their actions through false affidavits and reports taken from supposed informants. Rumours abounded in the press as to the extent of Rogers' crimes. In England, the public learned in the July 1768 *Gentlemen's Magazine* that:

> . . . the famous Major Rogers was turned traitor to his country, and now is in irons for conspiracy in order to surprize several fortresses, to kill the commandants, plunder the garrisons, and desert to the enemy.

None of this was true, but Rogers' reputation was tarnished forever. Before the trial it became readily apparent to the Crown Prosecutor, Hector Theophilus Cramahe, that the charges against Rogers lacked a shred of evidence to support them. Despite misgivings he dutifully proceeded on the instructions of Gage, but inevitably justice prevailed and Rogers was found "not guilty" on 31 October 1768. Enraged, Gage bullied the President of the Court Martial, Lieutenant-Colonel Valentine Jones, complaining the trial had become "an Affair of party and faction". The same could have been said for Rogers' arrest.

A petulant Gage refused to release Rogers from close confinement for three months, despite the court's dismissal of all charges. Only when confirmation of the final verdict arrived from London was Rogers allowed to go free. To his great disappointment, he learned that Tute and Carver had returned prematurely from their assigned task empty-handed. When he tried to be reinstated at Michilimackinac, the vindictive Gage had the last word. He refused to reinstate Rogers, citing the London letter as his authority to do so, as it contained the face-saving statement for Gage's benefit that there had been "great reason to suspect the said Major Rogers".

Frustrated, Rogers proceeded to London where six more years of despair awaited him. His petition for payment of charges owed him by the Crown was partially successful but the ever-present creditors soon reduced him to abject poverty. In 1772, he was thrown into the Fleet Prison for debt. Freed two years later as a result of a new bankruptcy law, Rogers petitioned for and secured his pay as a retired major which gave him enough money to return to America.

Rogers was immediately arrested on his arrival by Patriots for being a half-pay British officer. Giving his parole not to take up arms against his fellow countrymen, Rogers was quickly released to find himself once again hounded by creditors, despite the war raging around him.

Desperate for funds, he secretly applied to the Continental Congress for a commission in George Washington's army only to be turned down as "untrustworthy". Spurned by his country, he was soon rejected by his long-suffering wife who sued him for divorce. To add insult to injury, he was arrested a second time as a suspected spy.

Escaping his captors he made his way to General Howe's British forces where he was immediately offered a lieutenant-colonel's commission. Rogers concluded that his original parole had ceased from the moment of his second arrest and accepted. He then used his tarnished reputation to raise a Loyalist regiment: "The Queen's American Rangers". The men who joined were not the hardnosed, seasoned woodsmen of his New Hampshire days, but farmers and townsfolk who had never fired a shot in anger.

Rogers soon suffered the traditional British Army prejudices against colonials when his unit failed to meet their standards. Rogers was replaced by a regular officer and spent the rest of the war recruiting Loyalists, indulging in bouts of drunkenness and staving off his creditors. Captured in 1781 by the Americans, then exchanged and returned to England, Rogers lived his last 13 years in and out of prison. A British newspaper recorded that "the late Lieutenant-Colonel Rogers died on the 18 May 1795 in a most miserable state of wretchedness".

Robert Rogers, in truth, was a man of vision and energy who made too many enemies and could never extricate himself from a financial swamp, largely of his own making. He is the epitome of the tragic hero who struggles against the odds and loses everything important to him in doing so; his family, honour, courage and self-respect. Elevated to legendary status in his own lifetime, Rogers fell from grace, propelled by external forces greater than himself.

Perhaps the final words of the narrator in Kenneth Roberts' *Northwest Passage* leave the best image of the man. The young artist, Langdon Towne, has just left Fleet Prison after talking with the now dirty, pitiful, and alcoholic Robert Rogers:

> Rogers, I knew, had reached the height of his career — had come to a real grandeur of soul — on that terrible day when, at the end of our retreat from St. Francis, the woodcutters had dragged our raft ashore and helped the three of us stagger to the stockade at Number Four. I saw him as I had seen him in the flickering firelight of the fort; gaunt, barefooted, covered with bruises, hung with tattered strips of strouding. I remembered the shredded leggings hanging on his emaciated flanks; the ribs and bony chest that showed through his torn rags; the chunk of bread in his scarred, sooty, pitch-stained hands; and, as if it had been yesterday, I heard his thick voice saying: "Get me some beef! Fat beef! I'm going back! Back to my men — back to the Ammonoosuc!"

Lieutenant-Colonel Ian McCulloch is the Commanding Officer of the First Battalion, The Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) of Canada in Montreal, Quebec.

THE MACKENZIE KING CONTROVERSY

'Clay from Feet to Forehead'

By J.E. Rea

One of the most rewarding tasks of historians, in my experience, is to review material we have collected on our research trips; to organize it roughly and then to re-read it carefully and systematically and have the patterns emerge, either in response to our research design or, more excitingly, out of the material itself. Sometimes these patterns confirm an hypothesis, or quite unexpectedly, they prod us down an unintended byway that may result in an article or a discussion of a topic tangential to our main purpose. Such a "spin-off", to use the jargon, has resulted in this article.

In 1945, Thomas A. Crerar, whose papers I was consulting for a much larger project, resigned from the federal cabinet and, despite a momentary vindictive impulse of Prime Minister W. L. Mackenzie King, was given the Senate appointment he had long been promised. Within a very short time his correspondence changed markedly. No longer burdened by ministerial responsibility and free of the constant pressures of electoral politics, his range of correspondents sharply narrowed and the subject matter became much more reflective. Not that he lost his interest in Liberal Party affairs, certainly not as long as King lived. And even during the years of Louis St. Laurent and Lester Pearson Crerar watched with growing dismay, from his seat in the Senate and the caucus, the way in which the party seemed driven, lemming-like, to abandon its past and barter its principles to hold or regain power.

Until the early 1960s, Crerar was a very active Senator, especially during the years when he chaired the powerful Senate Banking and Finance Committee. Indeed, he and several former prominent Liberals — Norman Lambert, William D. Euler, Charles G. "Chubby" Power and others — were a much more effective opposition in the upper house than the few lonely Tory members who had survived the long years of Liberal hegemony. And they loved to bedevil the government. But Crerar's interests gradually changed. He began to develop a more active concern for international affairs, the Canadian economy and books. Throughout his life, reading had been first a necessity and then a delicious indulgence in hours stolen from the grind of daily activity. He had compensated for a very sketchy formal education in rural Manitoba by becoming a voracious but highly selective reader of history, biography and political economy, chiefly Canadian, American and British in their origin and context. With more leisure in the Senate, he was able to widen and deepen his reading tastes.

What struck me, as I read through the later Crerar material, was not simply the prosaic point that prior to the general ubiquity of television people read more, but the fact that to Crerar and his circle books were of great concern. It is true that very few books of any kind on Canadian public affairs were being published in the early 1950s, our literature like much else was still depressingly derivative. When Canadian books on national issues did appear, therefore, they were not read only for self-improvement, even less were they mere diversion, but became topics of analysis, discussion and controversy in themselves. Books really mattered. Hence with his old friends like Angus L. Macdonald and A.K. Cameron and several others, their correspondence frequently referred to any new publications and occasionally one would spark a rather extraordinary response. Such a book was Bruce Hutchison's *The Incredible Canadian*, a popular study of the recently departed prime minister, Mackenzie King, by one of the country's most prominent journalists.

> *"King was above everything else a superb master of expediency . . ."*
>
> **— Thomas Crerar.**

There were several features of the responses to Hutchison's book that are of interest: there was, first of all, the book itself as well as the author's ability

Winnipeg Free Press

Thomas Crerar in later life, a drawing by Peter Kuch.

and credibility; the degree to which Crerar and his friends warmed to their task as critics; the manner in which prominent newspapers took up and participated editorially in the reviewing process; the close and often ambivalent relationship of journalists and politicians; and the somewhat incestuous atmosphere of political Ottawa. To some extent, all these factors were symptomatic of a public fascination with King, even after his death. By his casting of the former prime minister as a man of mystery, Hutchison attempted to create a romantic image of the leader whose private life Canadians knew little; and by his bumptious claim that King was our greatest prime minister, he set up a natural target for those who had worked with King over all those years of Liberal success. In much of the public debate and private correspondence provoked by his book, Hutchison, quite inadvertently, elicited a very different portrait of our longest-serving first minister.

The Incredible Canadian was published late in 1952, the same year as the first volume of Donald Creighton's grand study of John A. Macdonald with which it was occasionally, but quite unfairly, compared. The initial public reaction to Hutchison's book came from his fellow journalists who welcomed it enthusiastically. Wilfred Eggleston, in the Causerie column of the *Winnipeg Free Press* which was Hutchison's primary newspaper affiliation, greeted it as "his greatest literary work" containing "some of the ablest journalistic writing of our time." Even Ottawa insiders, Eggleston asserted, would have their concepts of King enlarged and modified by what he concluded was "one of the most continuously interesting political books in our national literature." Nevertheless, there was a caution. As if he anticipated trouble, Eggleston referred to Hutchison's account of the conscription crisis of 1944 with the remark that a "reporter respects his sources and Bruce Hutchison has been most careful to say nothing on this score which could possibly embarrass his informants."

Max Freedman, Hutchison's friend and colleague and Washington correspondent for the *Free Press*, wrote that newspaper's formal review, thereby indicating that the new book was considered to be a publication of considerable significance. While more restrained than Eggleston, Freedman thought *The Incredible Canadian* was a timely, distinguished and, indeed, a brave venture so soon after King's death. Nevertheless, on three points at least, Freedman seemed to have clear reservations; the *soi-disant* constitutional crisis of 1926 was not the triumph for King that Hutchison claimed; more, much more, remained to be said about the conscription imbroglio and Freedman was given some pause by the reference to King as Canada's greatest prime minister.

The public criticism of the book began in *Saturday Night* with an article by the irrepressible Eugene Forsey, the scourge of the reviewing trade and much else besides. Using the only vaguely complimentary adjective I found in his long article, Forsey judged the book to be "adroit Liberal propaganda". While simply scoffing at the notion that King could be considered our greatest statesman, Forsey concentrated his attack on Hutchison's account of the King-Byng crisis of 1926 with its attendant denigration of Arthur Meighen, who had become something of a hero to Forsey who now leapt to his defence. And he was anything but subtle. "Mr. Hutchison," Forsey began, "hasn't the faintest notion what the crisis of 1926 was all about. He is utterly blind to what parliamentary responsible government really means. He leaves out a whole series of critical facts well-known and long established." One may infer that Hutchison's mortal sin was that he apparently had not consulted Forsey's writings on the issue. In any case, we are given Forsey's version, not only of King's actions in 1926 but on the Liberal charge that Meighen's brief and unfortunate government was somehow illegal. "Mr. Hutchison goes on purveying his stale partisan clap trap as if [Edward Blake] had never lived. The law, the precedents, the authorities,

are all clear and decisive on Mr. Meighen's side. So is common sense." He concluded by likening Hutchison's argument to a "Hollywood film on the theory of relativity, and has just about the same value."

Forsey's attack on the book, while more acerbic and intemperate, was not unrepresentative of academic opinion which has generally rejected Hutchison's account of King. Its publication was, naturally enough at that time, noted by the *Canadian Historical Review*. The *Review* asked the customarily gentle and gentlemanly James A. Gibson to assess *The Incredible Canadian*. In a rather brief review, he limited himself to comments on Hutchison's overblown prose style and a warning that a mature picture of King would depend upon access to fuller documentation. Gibson's review contributed little to the debate but his tepid enthusiasm probably helped to condemn the book in academe.

Far more revealing reactions to Hutchison's book, however, came from Crerar and his circle of intimates sat in on several conferences in Alexander Johnston's home when the day's events were frankly outlined and argued." Hutchison does not say who attended these meetings, but Alex Johnston was very close to Angus L. Macdonald and J.K. Ilsley, Nova Scotians all. Crerar was very friendly with all of them but it is not likely he was at these meetings since he was himself an eleventh hour convert to conscription. But it certainly is possible that he had attended.

Two months later, still prior to publication, Power wrote to Stuart Ralston, son of Colonel J.L. Ralston, the Minister of National Defence in the autumn of 1944. He recapitulated his correspondence with Hutchison for the younger Ralston and told him that Hutchison claimed his information came from Alex Johnston, Grant Dexter, and his conversations with Mackenzie King and "that he has had access to notes made by ex-ministers". Power continued that he had

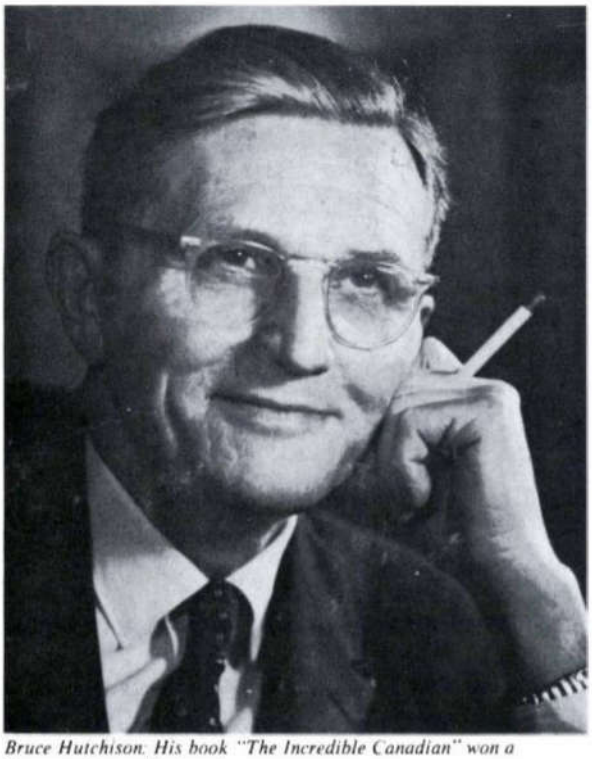
Canadian Press

The Mackenzie King Liberal cabinet, 1935. Crerar is at King's right. C.G. "Chubby" Power and James Ilsley are the two centre figures in the back row. W.D. Euler is seated second from right in the front row.

in the winter of 1952-53. As we shall see, however, their exchanges eventually resulted in Crerar making public his own views and thus precipitating a much more general and varied debate.

But initially, the response of King's former colleagues, especially of Crerar, was more concerned with Hutchison's sources of information since the book was undocumented. There was some suspicion that he may have used privileged information, particularly in his account of the conscription crisis. Indeed, Hutchison had discussed the matter prior to publication with Chubby Power, indicating ". . . when the Crisis was proceeding I was constantly in touch with the Conscriptionist Ministers who I think hid nothing from me or from my colleague, Grant Dexter. I recall that we pointed out to Hutchison that there was probably some question of Cabinet secrecy involved but had received the reply that "secrecy was almost completely thrown aside during the Debates," a problematic response, at best.

Crerar pursued the issue when *The Incredible Canadian* appeared late in 1952. He thanked Hutchison who had sent him a complimentary copy but then quickly registered a complaint over the latter's account of the conscription crisis. "My recollection is that I showed you a memorandum I had written on this in which these events were related. My recollection is distinct that this memo was shown to you in confidence and my assumption is that when you used this in your book you did it inadvertently. I do not think for a



Bruce Hutchison. His book "The Incredible Canadian" won a Governor-General's Award.

moment that you would knowingly use something which had been given to you in confidence." This not-so-gentle rebuke provoked an eight-page response from Hutchison who protested that "in thirty-five years of journalism I have never broken a confidence in print and the very last man I would ever wish to betray is you . . . because I happen to regard you as the finest gentleman who has ever given me his confidence."

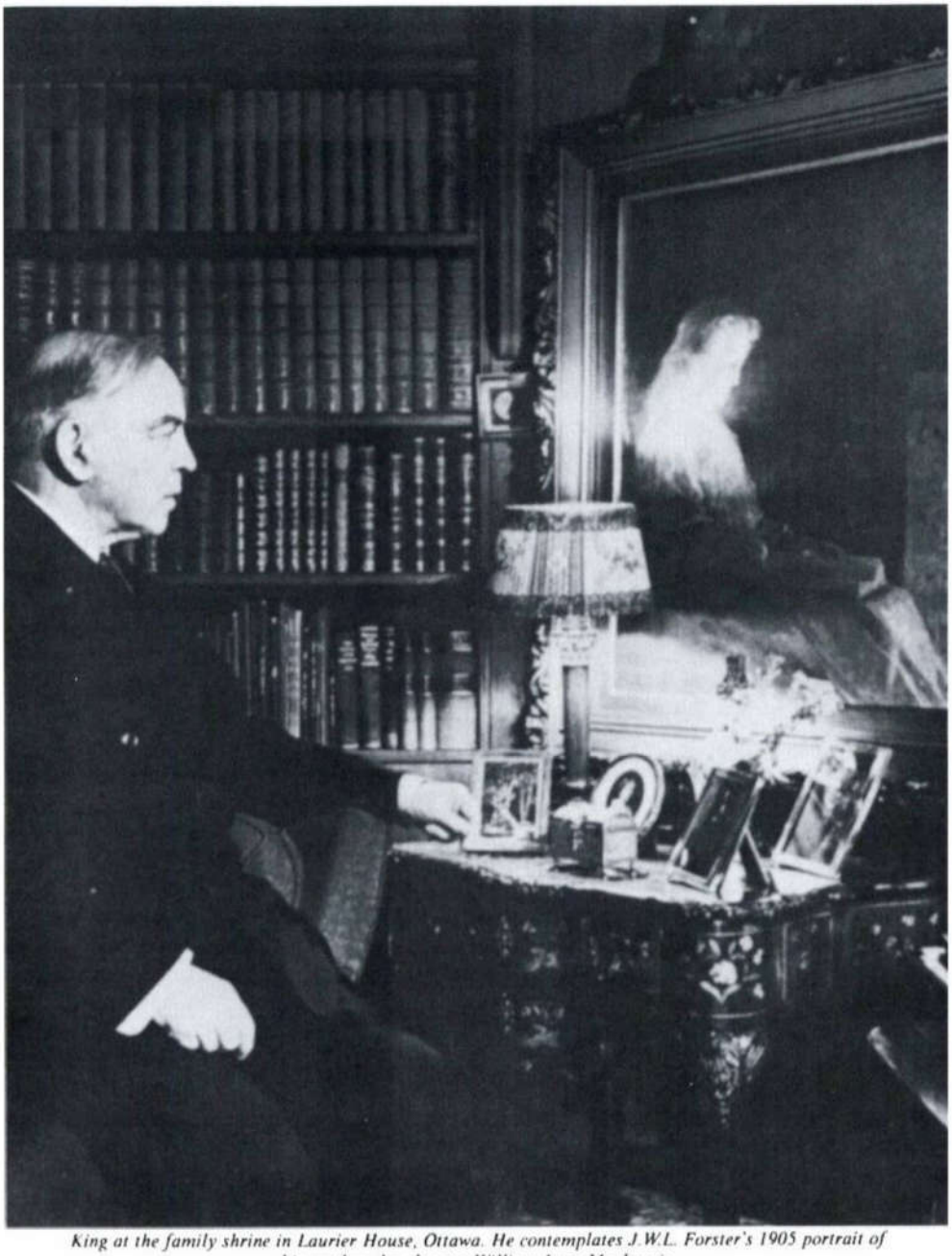
After rather too much more of the same, and a long description of his research for the book, Hutchison conceded that "I have seen so many documents and listened to so many communications and taken so many notes from so many people that I cannot recall what is in your diary except in a general way. . . ." The correspondence does not indicate that Crerar was at all mollified.

If the Senator was presumed to be one of Hutchison's major sources, and it appears that he was, the connecting link in people's minds was probably the *Winnipeg Free Press* for which Hutchison worked. Crerar's long and intimate friendship with its late editor John Wesley Dafoe was well known and Hutchison was, to some small extent, a protegé of Dafoe. But Crerar was quick to reject any such connection. In a letter to Professor Fred Gibson, he asserted that *The Incredible Canadian* "is not a good book. I know Hutchison personally and like him. His book is receiving a great deal of criticism, much of which is deserved. I hear indirectly I am regarded as the villain in the piece." Crerar denied it, telling Gibson that Hutchison never discussed the book with him; indeed, he had not known from Hutchison that he was even writing it. But he went on to say that he had shown his *aide-memoire* on the conscription crisis to Hutchison "in confidence". He was even more explicit in a letter to Angus L. Macdonald, who was still the Premier of Nova Scotia, claiming "there is one reference in the book that is clearly drawn from this memo", adding "I shall find out in time," Crerar speculated, "where Bruce got the most of his information. . . . Much of it came from his private talks with King. I suspect that much more came from [Jack] Pickersgill . . ." and, finally, "from conversations with Chubby Power, myself and also from Dexter's private papers." Hutchison, by the way, had claimed that Dexter did not even know that he was writing the book about King. While the implication remained, the issue of breach of confidence was not pursued any further. Of continuing interest was Hutchison's image of King and the reaction that was provoked among Crerar's group, especially the claim that King was our greatest statesman.

The most outraged response came from Kirk Cameron, a Montreal businessman and former Liberal candidate, with whom Crerar conducted a marvellously rich correspondence for nearly forty years. They held little back in their letters and Cameron, friend and ardent admirer of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, had no high opinion of King, seeing him as a very flawed successor. Hutchison's ranking of King as our leading prime minister was too much for him. He wrote angrily to Crerar that:

> Unwittingly Hutchison has catalogued King. He was a political, mental, and maybe a physical Hermaphrodite. Look at the evidence. He never conceived anything. He never created anything. Not even *Industry and Humanity*. Take out of this book what was taken from *The Workers East* and *The Workers West* and there is not much left. He never sponsored any cause of reform. He never organized anything in his life. Almost without exception his political wins were fortuitous or vicarious.

Cameron's bias was evident. The comparison with Laurier was to him simply unacceptable. The charge of plagiarism in King's book *Industry and Humanity* (1918) is interesting but I have so far failed to track down the evidence. In any case, Cameron was clearly not amused. Pointing to King's Uriah Heep repentance after the Beauharnois scandal of 1931 — "He sorrowed not for the sin but because he was found out" — Cameron judged that "Hutchison did not intend to but he has succeeded in painting King as one of the most despicable and unlovely characters in all political history. Morley found Gladstone had feet of clay before



King at the family shrine in Laurier House, Ottawa. He contemplates J.W.L. Forster's 1905 portrait of his mother, daughter to William Lyon Mackenzie.

he got through writing his life. Hutchison shows King as clay from feet to forehead." Both Gladstone and King, Cameron finally concluded his diatribe, "acted as if God's Prime Minister and expected God to act as advised."

At Cameron's suggestion, Crerar sent this outburst to Angus Macdonald commenting that *The Incredible Canadian* had aroused much interest and unfavourable criticism around Ottawa. "I am sorry Hutchison wrote the book", he went on "... he is quite wrong in his estimate that King was a great statesman, and his theory that King was a man of mystery does not stand up." It was not so much the book itself to which Crerar objected, but rather the portrait of King that is presented.

In his startlingly frank letter to Hutchison, made possible presumably by their friendship through the *Free Press* and Dafoe, Crerar rejected Hutchison's argument that King had consciously determined to move the Liberal Party to the left to achieve the wel-

fare state; a decision, the author had argued, which grew from convictions expressed in *Industry and Humanity*. "I have never believed," Crerar countered, "that King was moved by any conviction, deep or otherwise, in his sociological views toward the welfare state. King was above everything else a superb master of expediency." In Crerar's view expediency was King's only constant characteristic. King never "stood on principle to fight for anything," Crerar continued, echoing Cameron, "and consequently, in my opinion, lacked both moral and political courage."

But he saved his sharpest criticism for Hutchison's claim that King "was a greater statesman than McDonald [*sic*] or Laurier. I most emphatically disagree." The essence of statesmanship, Crerar proposed, is the ability to see the consequences five or ten years in the future of actions taken today. Hence a true statesman orders things wisely so beneficial results will develop and flow for years from any act he does. By this gauge, he told Hutchison, Macdonald and Laurier were statesmen and "the Canada we have today is very largely the product of their statesmanship, and of Borden's also. King has no similar monument." As evidence, Crerar charted that King virtually took Canada out of the League of Nations in the 1930s because he believed the actions of the League might lead to war and thus present King with embarrassing, domestic political difficulties. "This, my dear Bruce, is not statesmanship. It is opportunism . . . It is difficult to find a single act of creative statesmanship that King achieved." Crerar ended by predicting that when McGregor Dawson's scholarly biography of King appeared he would receive high marks only for his attempts to harmonize English and French Canadians.

Crerar's opinions about Hutchison's study of Mackenzie King would not remain private for very long. In February 1953 the Canadian Institute of International Affairs asked him to write a review of *The Incredible Canadian* for its quarterly, the *International Journal*. After some hestitation and with a measure of misgiving he agreed to do so. When he had completed the review he sent a copy to Arthur Meighen, remarking that "You will probably not agree with all I say. I purposely omitted anything about the 1944 crisis on conscription since my part in it was rather an active one." One must assume that Cabinet secrecy thus restrained him.

Meighen's reply was customarily direct. After briefly complimenting Crerar's review, he went on, "needless to say I have no better opinion of Mr. Hutchison's book than you have — hardly as good. The author has a rather startling command of an hysterical type of diction . . . better equipped for fiction than for history." And King's old antagonist suffered no such restraints as Crerar. Meighen roundly condemned King's handling of the conscription crisis, his attack on Colonel Ralston, and especially the reference to an apprehended army mutiny, which he considered simply an outrageous concoction. "King found that to retain his high office he had to swallow his past and he wanted an umbrage [*sic*] of cloud and fire under which to make the somersault. Mr. Hutchison's doctrine, of which he seems to be quite unashamed, is that decent, honourable conduct as well as Constitutional obligation are antiquated myths." Not surprisingly, Meighen had many other criticisms of the book and scolded Crerar mildly for not hammering King on the constitutional crisis of 1926. One would have expected little else of Meighen, I suppose. Crerar's own position on the King-Byng controversy was rather odd, to say the least. After reading Forsey's analysis, he was now prepared to concede that Byng was correct constitutionally, but that he had erred in judgement in not granting King his dissolution. It seems Crerar now wished to have things both ways, since he had, at the time, supported King in the dispute over whether Governor General Viscount Byng was correct in refusing King's request for a dissolution of Parliament. [Byng offered the government to Meighen's Conservatives who were defeated in a General Election later that year.]

In any case, his review of Hutchison's book — in fact it was entitled, *An Evaluation* — appeared in June 1953 and stimulated a rather extraordinary response in the daily press. In his review article Crerar rejected both of Hutchison's major claims for King, his steady devotion to the welfare of the people and his place in Canadian history as our greatest statesman. He even reassessed the former prime minister's political longevity of which he was so proud. According to Crerar, King's primary attributes rather were luck, intuition, opportunism and, where necessary, ruthlessness. Hence if Parliament had been allowed to decide the issue of the Customs Scandal in 1926, King's political career would have ended at that time. Crerar is especially critical in his review of Canada's abandonment of collective security in the 1930s when our voice should have been strongly in favour. He conceded King's ability as a political manager, but he did not admire it, pointing out that it was often cloaked in self-deception, conscious or otherwise. He referred, for example, to King's condemnation "of the War Time Elections Act of 1917 with burning fervour as an outrage against Canadian citizens of alien birth. Yet in the Second World War, he could defend with equal fervour, just as reprehensible or worse disabilities against Canadian citizens of Japanese origin, many of them Canadian-born. He could flatter and use people so long as they could serve his ends. When they could no longer do so, he could discard them as he would an old coat."

Toward the end of his review article, Crerar, rather uncharacteristically, revealed an emotional, intuitive side: "For more than ten years we were closely asso-

ciated in the work of government. Rightly or wrongly, the conviction slowly formed in my mind that in a vague way he had a sense of mission. The stars in their courses were fighting for him; so as the years passed he developed a strong inner self-confidence. For what purpose? Was the basic governing principle the Public Good? This is indeed doubtful." Rather, Crerar argued, it was King's determination to clear the family name, to exorcise the public memory of his grandfather, the rebel William Lyon Mackenzie who had to flee to the United States and whose daughter — King's beloved mother of the sensitive spirit — had been born in a garret in New York. King was determined to readjust the balance. He was not even buried in Ottawa, Crerar concluded, where he spent most of his life but was returned to Toronto "to be with his own".

Senator Crerar's long public career probably ensured that some notice would be taken of his opinion on Mr. King, but I doubt he was prepared for what followed. His review article was reprinted in full by the *Globe and Mail*, the *Ottawa Journal*, the *Montreal Star* and elsewhere and drew wide editorial comment, often in the partisan tradition of the newspaper concerned.

Editorially, the *Montreal Star* took exception to Crerar's denial that King deserved to be ranked with Macdonald, Laurier, Borden and Meighen. Using Crerar's own test of statesmanship — whether the consequences of an action were good or bad in the long run — the *Star* argued that for King foreign policy was a means to an end and thus he sought a common denominator which all Canadians would accept. The fact that we have survived as a nation was justification enough. The *Star* could not refrain from banging a few Tory heads along the way, pointing out that, after all, it was Macdonald who had hanged Riel and Borden who had precipitated the bitterly divisive conscription crisis of 1917. After thus attempting to explain away Crerar's case against King, the *Star* preferred "to name King a statesman, and let it go at that."

The *Ottawa Journal*, no friend of Mackenzie King, welcomed Crerar's contribution, commenting approvingly that "This, within Senator Crerar's fallibility, is authentic history." Hutchison's work was given short shrift as "all blacks and whites, no greys," a result of the author's "brilliantly unruly vocabulary." Crerar, on the other hand, writes "more calmly, more objectively, and of course with more knowledge." While giving King his due, the *Journal* concurred, Senator Crerar has "pretty much demolished the legend built up by propagandists and sentimentalists, that Mr. King was a warrior for the underdog, that he was the main architect of our famous 'status' and that he had 'a sense of mission for Canada' ". The editorialist readily agreed with Crerar that King's only consistent mission was for his own political legacy, "that history might forget or correct the mistake of an ancestor in 1837."

A complimentary cartoon showing Arthur Meighen as prime minister, steering the ship of state through troubled waters.

And the *Journal* strongly endorsed Crerar's attribution of luck and chance as explanations for King's lengthy public career. Fate came to his aid in the form of a highly dubious constitutional issue in 1926 "when his star was gravely atremble." Thus began the legend of political "genius"; a genius the *Journal* remarked sourly that consisted of little else than choosing able Quebec lieutenants, "the Lapointes, the Cardins and the Powers — to not let the sun go down on the wrath of military conscription. It was an appeal to prejudice as effective as it was unworthy." Having thus unloaded on King, the editorial, rather patronizingly, commended his dedication to public life, his mastery of Parliamentary technique and his political instinct. But the real value of Crerar's piece, the *Journal* concluded, was to "put King in perspective, rescuing him from the malice of some and the dewy-eyed worship of others."

More thoughtful, but no less complimentary to Crerar and thus critical of King, was Arthur Ford's long editorial in the *London Free Press*, wherein he said there was no one in Canada more qualified than the Senator to write with such authority on politics and politicians and especially on King. Ford strongly supported Crerar's view that Hutchison gave far too much credit to King in the development of Canadian autonomy. He was entitled to a share but his contribution did not rank with that of Laurier, Borden and Meighen. During the thirties, Ford commented, Canada's role reflected King's fear of what another war would do to his position as Prime Minister. Canada

could not have stopped the march to war, Ford observed, but at least we "would have been on the right side."

Ford, on Crerar's arguments, also rejects Hutchison's claim that King destroyed the Progressive Party (they destroyed themselves was Crerar's opinion) and along with many others dismisses Hutchison's claim that King was justified in his actions in 1926. His future career was due more to chance than political wizardry. Ford concluded his editorial by urging Crerar to write his own memoirs and redress to some extent what he dismisses as Hutchison's "historical novel with Mr. King as the hero."

All the newspaper comment set off yet another round of letters among Crerar and his pals, including a long letter from an old antagonist from Progressive Party days, W.C. Good, who seized the occasion to re-fight some of the battles of the twenties. But the dispute over Bruce Hutchison's book soon faded although the memory of King did not. Was there any long term significance to this episode? Perhaps there is at least one lesson to be learned.

The Incredible Canadian, itself, made little lasting impact; it is read today only by historians of Canadian journalism. But is was only the first of many studies of King over the years and began an historiographical controversy that still burbles along. Hutchison's overley favourable treatment of King was soon counterbalanced by a savaging at the hands of Harry Ferns and Bernard Ostry, itself an equally controversial book. Both of these extreme treatments of King were pushed aside by the three-volume, heavily documented, and presumably the official biography by MacGregor Dawson and Blair Neatby, which was, especially in Neatby's two splendid volumes, less sympathetic to King, but determinedly fair. The warts were certainly there for all to see if not admire. To reveal more fully, if not indeed to expose King, a new twist was then taken by Colonel C.P. Stacey's elegant voyeurism in *A Very Double Life* which was in turn pounced upon and denied by Joy Esbery in *Knight of the Holy Spirit*, which made up in insight what it lacked in context. Latterly, in studies of King's performance during World War II such as Jack Granatstein's *Canada's War*, King's image has been polished up considerably as his concern for a French-English rupture over conscription was still reflected in the increasing fragility of our national life. Understandable as these swings in interpretation may be, the controversy about King's proper historical rendering revealed in Crerar's papers following the appearance of Hutchison's book offers a clear admonition. As historians strive to understand and re-interpret Canada's political life, there is always the danger that we may over-emphasize the importance of context and be too affected by "presentism". In our attempts to make history relevant we may, in fact, be doing it a serious disservice. Who were in a better position to observe and judge King than the men who served with him year after year; who shared not only the council table but the unending pressures of responsibility and the unassignable burdens of decisions that would shape the nation or perhaps destroy it? In the eyes of those who worked so closely with King there was no enigma, no mystery; only the determination to survive. Their opinions should not be discounted. ♦

J.E. Rea is Professor of History at the University of Manitoba, Winnipeg. He is preparing a biography of Thomas Crerar.

King, The Man

"I feel I am being guided from above, that dear Mother & Father & Bell & Max the whole family in Heaven are guiding and directing me."
— W.L. Mackenzie King, diary, 1925.

"Mr. King is a great man by almost any definition. You may not like him, and many do not, wasting their entire lives in hatred of him. But you cannot deny him."
— Bruce Hutchison, "The Unknown Country", 1942.

"He is said to be a man whose mind is strictly empiric, untroubled by feelings of inconsistency, representing the quintessence of the popular view of the moment, a judgment surely borne out by his political conduct. He is the ordinary man writ large."
— A.R.M. Lower, 1946.

"Mackenzie King was chiefly concerned to avoid committing himself to anything."
— Leo Amery, memoirs, 1953.

"He united a grey colourlessness of style, a grey ambiguity of thought, and a grey neutrality of action. He became an acknowledged expert in the difficult business of qualifying, toning down, smoothing out, and explaining away."
— Donald G. Creighton, 1954.

"William Lyon Mackenzie King/ Sat in the middle & played with string/ And he loved his mother like anything —/ William Lyon Mackenzie King."
— Dennis Lee, 1974.

"Truly he will be remembered/ Wherever men honour ingenuity,/ Ambiguity, inactivity, and political longevity."
— Frank R. Scott, 1957.

'A Most Troublesome Useless Servant'

The Case for Francis Noel Annance

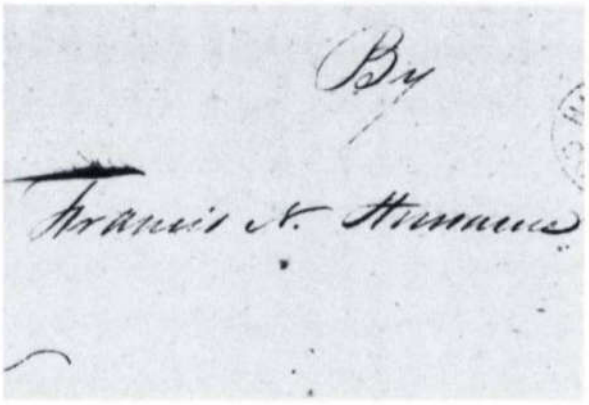
By Morag Maclachlan

In his book *Hollywood's Canada*, published in 1975, Pierre Berton explored the way Canadians were depicted in American movies and compared the caricature with the reality. The half-breed, a word Berton claimed had been made "nasty" by Hollywood, was depicted as a sneaky, untrustworthy degenerate who coveted defenceless white women. Was this characterization a Hollywood creation, as he argued, or was there some basis in reality? An examination of the facts available about the life of Francis Noel Annance may give us some insight, not only into the way he was devalued, but also into the effect such treatment had on his personality.

If all we knew of Annance depended on the Hudson's Bay Company journal kept by John Stuart at Fort Simpson in 1833-34, we would judge him to be sullen and untrustworthy. He made demands for special treatment, refused to accede to instructions and, while Stuart was on a tour of other forts under his command, seduced his wife. It is not surprising that when Annance's contract expired in 1835, Governor George Simpson dismissed him from the service stating that he had been "a most troublesome useless servant."

Francis Noel Annance, born at St. Francis in 1789, was described by George Simpson, Governor of the Northern Department of the Hudson's Bay Company, as an "Abeneki half-breed". He belonged to a unique North American family whose history he could trace to the days of the French and Indian Wars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Many Abeneki Indians, pushed out of their homelands by the expansion of the New England colonies, were encouraged to settle in the Richelieu Valley where they provided a buffer for the French against attacks by the English and their allies, the Iroquois. The Abeneki, with the French and on their own, raided New England settlements, frequently taking captives. Among these were two children, Samuel Gill of a well known Massachusetts family, and Rosalie James, whose father was a Protestant minister. They were adopted by their captors among whom they remained all their lives. In 1715 they were married and became the parents of five sons and two daughters.

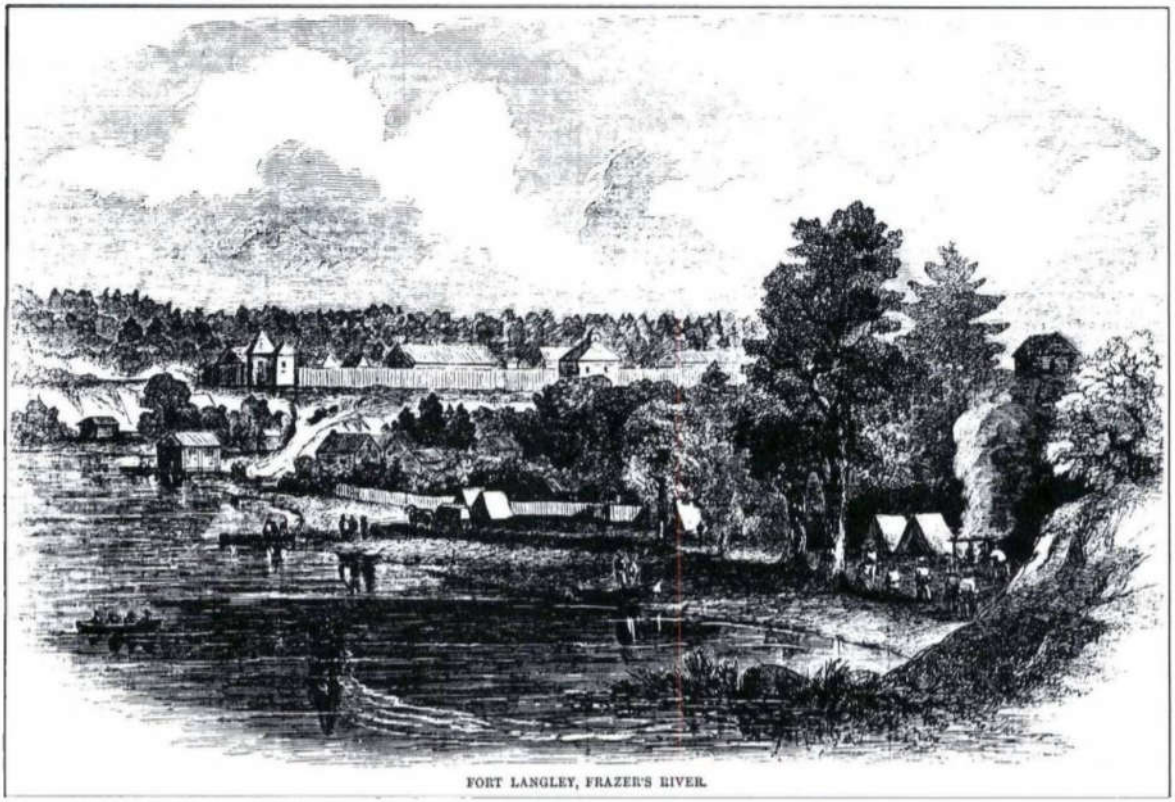
Their eldest son, Joseph Louis Gill, became Chief of the Abeneki. Conscious of his English blood, he did not depend on hunting but engaged in farming and commerce. His first wife, an Abeneki, was killed in 1759 when Rogers' Rangers, on a retaliatory expedition from New England, destroyed St. Francis. His second wife, Suzanne Gamelin, a Canadien and devout Roman Catholic, objected to his decision to send their son and three of his nephews to Moor's Indian Charity



Signature of Francis Noel Annance on the title page of "A Journal of a Voyage from Fort George Columbia River to Fraser River in the Winter of 1824 and 1825". In the Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Winnipeg. No likeness of Annance has been traced.

School in Hanover, New Hampshire. This was in response to an invitation by three Protestant missionaries from New England who visited St. Francis in 1774. Although Joseph Louis Gill became a Catholic and held the important post of Prayer Chief, he welcomed the opportunity for Gill grandchildren to acquire an English education. This affiliation and some of his actions caused doubt about his loyalty to the British cause during the American Revolution, but he convinced his critics that his allegiance was to the crown.

The boys were admitted to the school in 1775, three of them returning home four years later. The fourth, Francis Joseph Annance, son of Joseph Louis' sister, Marie Appoline Gill, and her husband, an Indian named Annance, spent two years at Dartmouth College where he studied until 1780. He appears in school



Fort Langley on the Fraser River, from "Harper's Weekly", October 1858. This establishment replaced the fort that Annance helped to found, which burned in 1840.

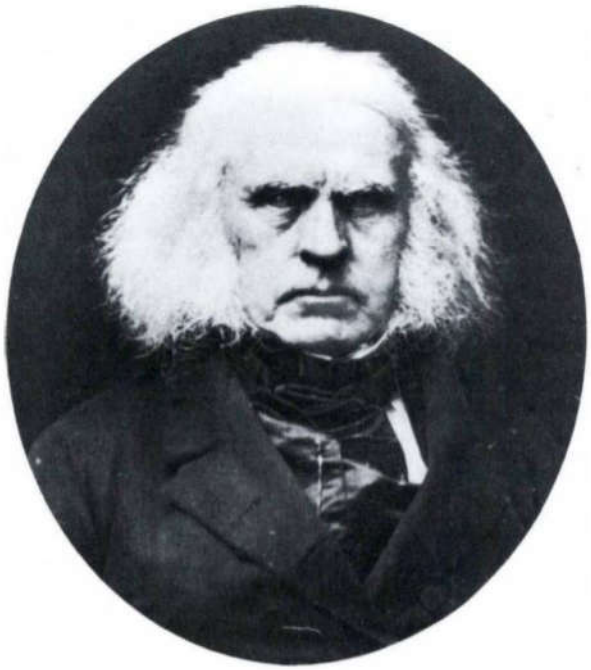
memoirs as Francis Joseph the Great, presumably because his teachers followed his progress and knew that he became an Abeneki chief and was master of the Royal School at St. Francis.

Father Joseph A. Maurault, who ministered to the Abeneki community at St. Francis from 1841, recorded, in his 1866 *Histoire des Abenekis,* all the descendants of the male children of Samuel and Rosalie Gill but, for the daughters, only their husbands' names. It seems probable, however, that Francis Noel Annance was the eldest of Francis Joseph's three sons. The two youngest attended Moor's Indian Charity School as children, but Noel, as he was known in St. Francis, attended as a young adult and received favourable reports on his progress.

On his return from Hanover in 1812, he joined other Abeneki in supporting the British side in the War of 1812. His father acted as interpreter and he became a lieutenant in the Indian Department under the command of Colonel Sir John Johnson. He was also a schoolmaster, but in 1819, along with several other Abeneki, he joined the North West Company and was sent to the Columbia district on the Pacific. There he became one of the leaders of a group of trappers who received fifty pounds a year and pay for the furs they brought in.

After the absorption of the North West Company in 1821, Annance was retained as a clerk by the Hudson's Bay Company. It was probably because of his familiarity with the Columbia district that he was chosen in 1824 as one of the clerks to go on a hazardous expedition from Fort George at the mouth of the Columbia to the Fraser River. George Simpson was concerned that American settlement would invade the area, which since 1818 had been held in joint occupancy between Britain and the United States, one of the outcomes of the War of 1812. Simpson hoped that a headquarters on the Fraser would tap the furs of New Caledonia and be safe from the American settlement frontier. On this expedition, led by James McMillan, three of the clerks kept journals, but Annance's appears to have been the one sent to the headquarters. It reveals some of the effects of his education — a flowery literary style and a grounding in the classics.

Annance undoubtedly felt that his education would provide opportunities for advancement, but it was his skills as a woodsman which were most valuable. He did much of the hunting on the 1824 expedition and throughout his career on the Pacific he was frequently sent on exploratory trips. In 1827 he was with the party that established Fort Langley on the lower Fraser where



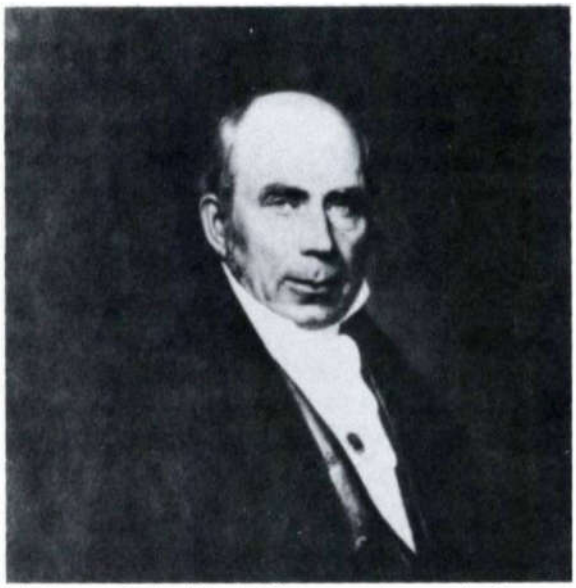
Chief Factor John McLoughlin was a formidable enemy to Francis Annance, causing Annance to seek release from Company service.

he stayed as Indian trader until 1830. There is evidence that both James McMillan and Archibald McDonald, the first two men in charge of the fort, considered him very useful. He was educated in English, fluent in French, had mastered several Indian languages as well as being a first-rate trapper and hunter. McMillan believed that he could have taken charge of Fort Langley and McDonald, with whom he had served at Kamloops, wanted to retain Annance if his force had to be reduced to one clerk.

With the decline of the fur trade and the amalgamation of the two great fur trading companies, the number of positions available was sharply reduced. In the highly structured, hierarchical fur-trade society there were large gaps between the ranks. Pay for the men was usually seventeen pounds a year; clerks graduated from fifty to one hundred pounds, but promotion to chief trader or chief factor brought shares in the Company as well as an increase in pay. Many young men who had started as clerks with the Hudson's Bay Company became restless and dissatisfied as the opportunities for promotion became severely limited.

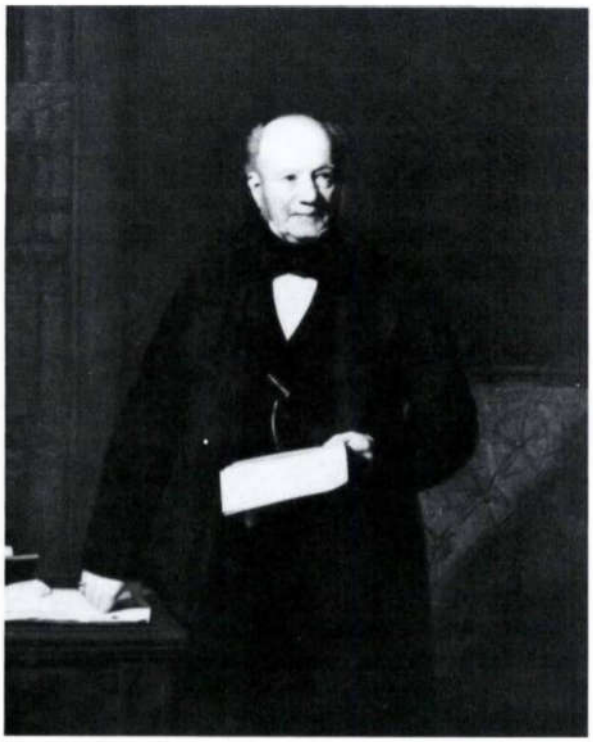
When Annance left Fort Langley in 1830, he had passed his fortieth year. He began to come into conflict with Chief Factor John McLoughlin, whom he described in very bitter terms in a letter to a friend. Though there is no written evidence that Annance's transformation from a willing, useful servant to a discontented, unco-operative one was because of lack of promotion, it seems highly likely. Annance was not the only ambitious clerk who was disappointed, but he must have noticed that promotions went to those who had no Indian blood. He watched men he had worked with — James McMillan, who was barely literate; John Tod, who had been as dissatisfied as he, and Archibald McDonald, who relied heavily on Annance at Kamloops and Fort Langley — receive with their promotions enhanced financial security and furloughs which allowed them to visit their home countries.

We also have evidence that Annance considered himself capable of assuming a leadership role. In 1832 he wrote to the Governor General of the Canadas requesting a grant of land north of the Columbia on which colonists could be settled. His father, Francis Joseph Annance, had succeeded in obtaining land for a group of Abeneki when the village of St. Francis became overcrowded and he had also obtained a grant



John Stuart, who found his "wife" in Annance's room when he returned to Fort Simpson from a tour. Wedding plans were abandoned.

of land for himself and his family on a small island in the St. Francis River. It was Noel who presented the petition to the Governor in 1808, an experience on which he was undoubtedly drawing. His plan for the beautiful plains between the Columbia and Fraser rivers indicates that he was aware of the threat the arrival of American settlers would be to the British claim. But the Hudson's Bay Company had the British trading rights on the Pacific slope and did everything possible to inhibit settlement. McLoughlin recognized the problem, and several years later, in spite of the official policy of returning employees to their point of departure, began to encourage men retiring from the fur trade to settle in the Willamette and Cowlitz Valleys. It was too little too late.



Governor George Simpson demanded that Annance resign after his affair with John Stuart's wife was discovered. (From a painting by Stephen Pearce for the Hudson's Bay Company.)

Annance discussed his plan with John Tod and with William Fraser Tolmie and it is likely that McLoughlin was aware of it. He would have regarded such action as presumptuous and it probably exacerbated the conflict between them. Certainly it was later that year that Annance described McLoughlin to his friend, James Yale, in very bitter terms and stated his intention to leave the service. He asked permission to go to York Factory but his request was ignored and when he attempted to leave the fur country in 1832, he was ordered to return and fulfill his contract which did not expire until 1835.

The fact that the Company chose to ignore Annance's efforts to resign and began to grant some of his requests is an indication that he was a servant they valued. He was promoted to postmaster, the highest office available to mixed-blood men, and in the fall of 1833 he was sent to Fort Simpson, a remote post on the Mackenzie River, with the understanding that he would be allowed to go to York Factory the next spring.

When Annance reached Fort Simpson, he came in contact with John Stuart, Simon Fraser's partner on the famous trip to the Pacific in 1808 and one of the pioneers of the brigade trail from New Caledonia to the Columbia. Stuart's journal reveals resentment over some of the changes that occurred after the amalgamation and a fierce determination to prove that he was still fit for service in the fur trade. The fact that he was posted to Mackenzie River probably indicates that he was no longer held in very high regard by those in authority. When Annance arrived, full of his own grievances, the two men clashed, but usually Annance apologized after he had offended, perhaps an indication that his moody behaviour was not normal. The men might have tolerated each other if it had not been for Annance's affair with Mary Taylor, Stuart's country wife.

From the information we have, it would appear that Annance had a stable family life during his years on the Pacific slope. In 1867, as an old man, he testified at the Connolly-Woolrich trial in Montreal in support of the validity of country marriages. His own country wife was with him at Kamloops, Fort Langley and Fort Colvile, and was the mother of his three sons, one of whom drowned, causing Annance great grief. In January 1833 he requested that his family be brought from Fort Colvile to Fort Vancouver. McLoughlin relayed the request but authorized it only if there was no other use for the horses. We have no way of knowing whether Mrs. Annance reached Fort Vancouver. She may have declined to leave the Pacific, but it is unlikely that she would have been abandoned. McLoughlin would have insisted that Annance make provision for her. She may have been "turned off", in other words had a husband found for her. Annance obviously considered the relationship over when he left on his way to Montreal.

When Stuart returned from his tour, he found his wife in Annance's room. According to the account he recorded in his journal, she chose her husband and said she had been pressured by the "Blackguard Annance," upon whom Stuart placed all the blame. Mary, he decided, had been deluded and, though he had intended to marry her, he would now have to reconsider. In a letter to John McLeod, however, Stuart admitted that he had remained unsuspicious even though Mary had ceased to treat him as her husband. She had fallen "over head and ears in love" with Annance. Stuart's response was to threaten her lover and send Mary to Fort Liard. In his rage he listed all his grievances against "the abominable Annance," creating an image not dissimilar to the Hollywood version of the half-breed. Simpson, whose attitude to country wives was cavalier, disgusted with both men, decided against Annance, demanding the resignation that had earlier been refused.

In her study of women in the fur trade, *Many Tender Ties*, Sylvia Van Kirk assumed that Annance had raped Mary Taylor. Her argument that mixed-blood girls were vulnerable to predatory men is a valid one but can be supported better by citing Stuart's treatment of her as a piece of property than by assuming Annance had "pressured" her. Obviously the love affair had begun before Stuart left on his round of visits. Annance's

passionate love letters, which John Stuart painstakingly copied into the journal, are not those of a rapist, nor were his promises to take Mary with him to Montreal as his wife. It is hardly surprising to learn that Stuart feared for his life. Annance recovered from his anger at losing Mary and sent her a tender farewell letter and apologized to Stuart in terms which reflect the Christian training to which he had subjected himself and the authoritarian nature of fur-trade society which gave great power to those in charge.

Most of the St. Francis boys who returned from Moor's Indian School over the years came back as Protestants. One, Paul Masta, established a school and ministered to his own people. To Roman Catholic priests, this was a terrible, evil threat and they fought Masta's efforts so strenuously that he left the village a disçouraged man. But British officials decided to encourage the English-speaking Protestant group and Noel Annance was recommended by the Indian agent as the master for a new school. He returned to St. Francis in 1845, apparently to take up this position. He also requested and received renewal of the lease for land on Long Island in the St. Francis River, granted to the family in 1809, and he appears on the census of 1851 with a wife and two children. It is likely that he farmed and taught school in the village for many years, helping to preserve the English-speaking Protestant Abeneki traditions that exist to this day side by side with the French-speaking Catholic ones.

In exploding the Hollywood myth, Berton assumed the half-breed appellation referred to the Métis whom he described as law-abiding. But, like Annance, the Métis rebelled. Perhaps with his fondness for literary and classical allusions Annance could have said, "Whom the Gods would destroy they first make mad." But both Annance and the Métis survived. It was their dreams that were shattered — the desire of the Métis to create their own nation as they adapted to an agricultural life and of Annance to succeed in the white Protestant world for which he so carefully prepared. ♦

The author is grateful to the staff of the National Archives of Canada in Ottawa, the Dartmouth College Library, Hanover, New Hampshire, and the Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Winnipeg, whose assistance enabled her to follow leads provided by Gordon Day, author of "The Identity of the Saint Francis Indians", National Museum of Man Mercury Series, 1981.

Morag Maclachlan is a Vancouver scholar. Her edition of the "Fort Langley Journals" will be published in 1993 by the University of British Columbia Press.

On the Canada West Frontier, 1847-1852

BACKWOODS DOCTOR

By M.R. Redclift

A recently discovered cache of family letters provides a vivid picture of life on the Canadian frontier in the 1840s, and an interesting commentary on some of the broader themes explored in the historiography of nineteenth-century Canada.

The letters were sent by Francis Codd, a doctor from Letheringsett in Norfolk, who was 24 when he arrived in Canada in 1847. They were sent to his father, the Reverend Charles Codd, the Vicar of Letheringsett, and to his younger brother, Henry. Altogether 21 letters survive. They begin with Francis' arrival in Pembroke, Canada West, in February 1847 and continue until January 1852, at which point he is expecting Henry to visit him in Canada. There is an interruption in the correspondence during 1848 when Francis evidently returned to England; the correspondence resumes in April 1849 when he is writing from the barque *Portly* off Margate en route for Canada once again.

Francis Codd qualified at the College of Surgeons in Lincoln Inn Fields in 1844 when he was 21 years old. He must have had difficulty in finding a medical post in England; his letters imply that he needed a patron before he could establish himself properly.

In Canada opportunities were very much better. He chose to settle in what was then virtually uncharted country, in the hamlet of Pembroke, to the north of what was then termed Canada West. The area to the south had already been settled; it represented the "civilized Canada" of small farms and flourishing towns such as Hamilton. The Algonquins, where Francis tried to establish himself, was another country. Apparently it took his fancy "because it was such a long way off". Few settlers had penetrated the region, and the road to Pembroke was still used principally as a winter route by lumbermen. Not until 1860 was a road opened from Renfrew County to the north-west. On the night of 12 February 1847 Francis Codd arrived in Bytown (later Ottawa) from Montreal, in a covered sleigh drawn by two horses. He was swathed in buffalo skins to keep out the sub-zero temperatures. The journey from Montreal had taken one day and a night.

According to Francis, Bytown was already "one of the best planned and most flourishing towns in Canada" with about 7,000 inhabitants, but in the late 1840s it was a very rough town indeed. It was "the scene of frequent riots and headbreakings between rival Irish and Canadien lumbermen". In the early 1840s the Irish had attempted to drive the French Canadians out by force and had met reprisals in turn. The Irish, before the 1850s, were usually Ulstermen and the battles they fought with French Canadian Catholics were looked upon as "Holy Wars". Francis Codd had become a Catholic and this fact was to influence his judgement of many things, notably the choice of a marriage partner. He observed wryly that "Catholic Englishmen are regarded as nondescript in Canada, where being English confers prestige on anyone, for an Englishman is regarded to be a man of honour till he proves himself to the contrary".

First impressions of the area to the north of Bytown were mixed. He notes that the countryside was "not gloomy like the winter scenery in England, but quite entrancing". This aesthetic delight was to continue unabated during the subsequent four years. The people were less attractive than the countryside, however:

"There is no other part of Canada peopled by such savages . . . and no law or civil power within a hundred miles to control them". He soon found that his patients rarely paid their bills, were regularly drunk and expected him to save their lives or he risked losing his own. By April 1847 he had found "great favour with all the people . . . but the cares and duties of a doctor's life are greater even than I expected".

On the frontier a distinctive lumber community had developed which combined logging in the winter with farming in the summer. Francis Codd was to find many of his patients within this unruly fraternity. He was expected to distance himself from them: "I cannot farm and practice medicine; patients would not like it and I would not have the time". Indeed, he is told by an admirer that he is "not half roughian enough for this place". Nevertheless those who do succeed earn his admiration. Soon after arriving he meets a woman from Norfolk who tells him "Lank, Sir, if the poor creatures at home only knew what a place Canada is, it would be good for 'em". Eight months later he is writing that if he had the £200 with which he landed in Canada he would "go into the bush and become a farmer" rather than a doctor. Typical of the "success

Photo by M.R. Redclift

The "Old Rectory" at Letheringsett, Norfolk, built for Francis Codd's father, the Reverend Charles Codd, in the 1840s. It was to this house that Francis Codd's "letters home" were sent. The elder Codd must have joined his sons in Canada, for he died at Ottawa in October 1870, aged 73.

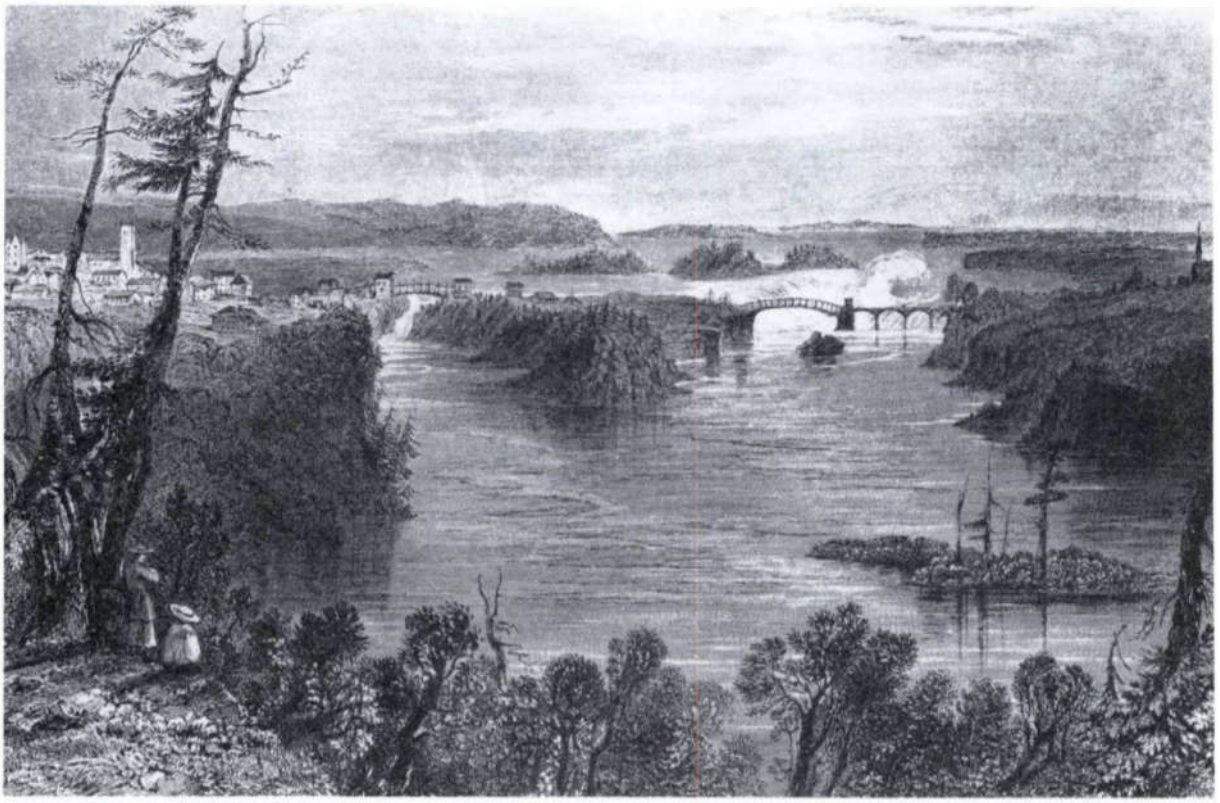
stories" he encounters is a man named Pinhey (Hamnett Kirkes Pinhey, landowner, politician and author, 1784-1857) who lived near Bytown. Francis notes that although he was not a poor man when he migrated . . . "now he is probably in ten times the living and independence he did in England . . . had he stayed in England he would still have been a nobody . . . now he is a member of Legislative Council . . . is the founder perhaps of a noble Canadian family and owns the greater part of the township of March".

The frontier seems to have been distinguished by property-owning anarchy as much as a "forest proletariat". Land was cheap and easily available, especially since the land grant system had been abandoned. It was, however, the revenue to be derived from lumbering which attracted government interest in the region and necessitated a road-building programme. For the colonizing population cheap land was an important accompaniment to lumbering. Francis noted that "all farming produce meets with a ready market here from the timber merchants and yet a hundred acre lot, half cleared, sells for about £50 . . .". Farther from the settlements one could buy "a farm of 500 acres for £40; but only thirty acres of it cleared".

The essence of succeeding on the frontier was efficient self-provisioning. The people made maple sugar and molasses, and picked strawberries and blueberries in the summer. The "main art of living in Canada is to do with as little *cash* as possible and if a man has a farm he can raise his own flour, pork, butter and cheese", Codd wrote. Fish and venison were bought from the Indians. In other words it was as important to save money as to make it. The life of a frontier farmer was rewarding but it was also hard. Farming "does very well for a man who has a family and who is willing to lead a *stationary,* moneyless life and be considered as an equal by all his clodhopping neighbours and labourers". Were such condescending attitudes borne of envy, perhaps?

In 1850, after his return to Canada, Francis builds a house and employs a housekeeper, which proves more economical than renting rooms. He is still constantly in debt — with the compensation that it means his credit is always good — but his income has improved. It is still difficult for him to make social comparisons with England. His friend, Mr. Donnell, "a civilised lumberman . . . lives as a man would in England worth £400 or £500 a year, though in fact he is a very quiet man in this part of Canada". Those who make good still lack many amenities. In December 1849 he writes: "I begin to think that £100 in England is worth £200 out of it as far as comfort is concerned".

Credit worthiness came to assume more importance the longer he lived in Canada. Since few people arrived



Bytown (left) and Hull (right) in the early 1840s, a few years before Francis Codd passed through on his way to Pembroke. This W.H. Bartlett print shows the Chaudière Falls.

with much capital and the flow of cash was so irregular, what mattered most was personal credit. In January 1852 he calculated that he had earned £130 from his practice in the previous year. Of this sum £92 was still due to him and he had accumulated debts of £77. He asks his father rhetorically whether "if I had been in the same situation in England I should have met with as much help in the shape of credit as I have had in Canada? I love old England very much but I should not like to try it I must confess".

What did it mean to be a professional man in a speculative economy marked by transient labour and the complete absence of social bench-marks? The letters provide many clues. Not surprisingly few frontiers-people were concerned with social etiquette. Francis notes innumerable instances where social habits were made to serve utilitarian ends. In December 1849 he records meeting "an uncivilized Scotsman who took the soup ladle for a spoon and held it above his head while he drank from it saying 'Eh, mon, but this is the awful spun!' " On another occasion an old woman who kept a tavern "could not find the carving fork so she took hold of one end of the joint of beef with her hand and the other with her teeth and carved from it with the carving knife, talking all the while". His companion, a Mr. Harper, "was nearly killed with laughing", but the unabashed tavern-keeper only thought he was laughing at her jokes.

Professional status had to be earned in a society where nobody's family counted for much. Francis Codd earned respect for shooting the rapids in a bark canoe that he bought from an Indian and after shooting a deer, writes "I consider myself a great hunter now and am the envy of the other sporting white men in the village — don't laugh!" This was in December 1850. His earlier attempts at hunting game had proved disastrous, culminating in a confrontation with a bear.

As a doctor Francis expected to be called out to attend the sick and dying, but few English doctors can have suffered so many privations in the cause of duty. In June 1847, visiting a patient, he paddles fourteen miles in his canoe near Ile des Allumettes and is nearly eaten alive by mosquitoes. On another occasion he visits Fort William by boat and has his grog stolen by Indians. In December 1849 he quarrelled with "my dear friends the raftsmen" over one of their number whom he had treated. The raftsmen threaten vengeance. At such times, he writes "I find my revolver a very agreeable and necessary companion!" In December 1850 when he lived in Renfrew, he records that

THE EMIGRANTS GUIDE
Fine Land to grow wheat if you can plough it
SILK Stockings
APARTMENTS TO LET
TIMBER for BUILDING
Fine GRASS LAND only 300 feet below the surface of the Snow
TRACTS
TRACTS
THE EMIGRANTS WELCOME TO CANADA.

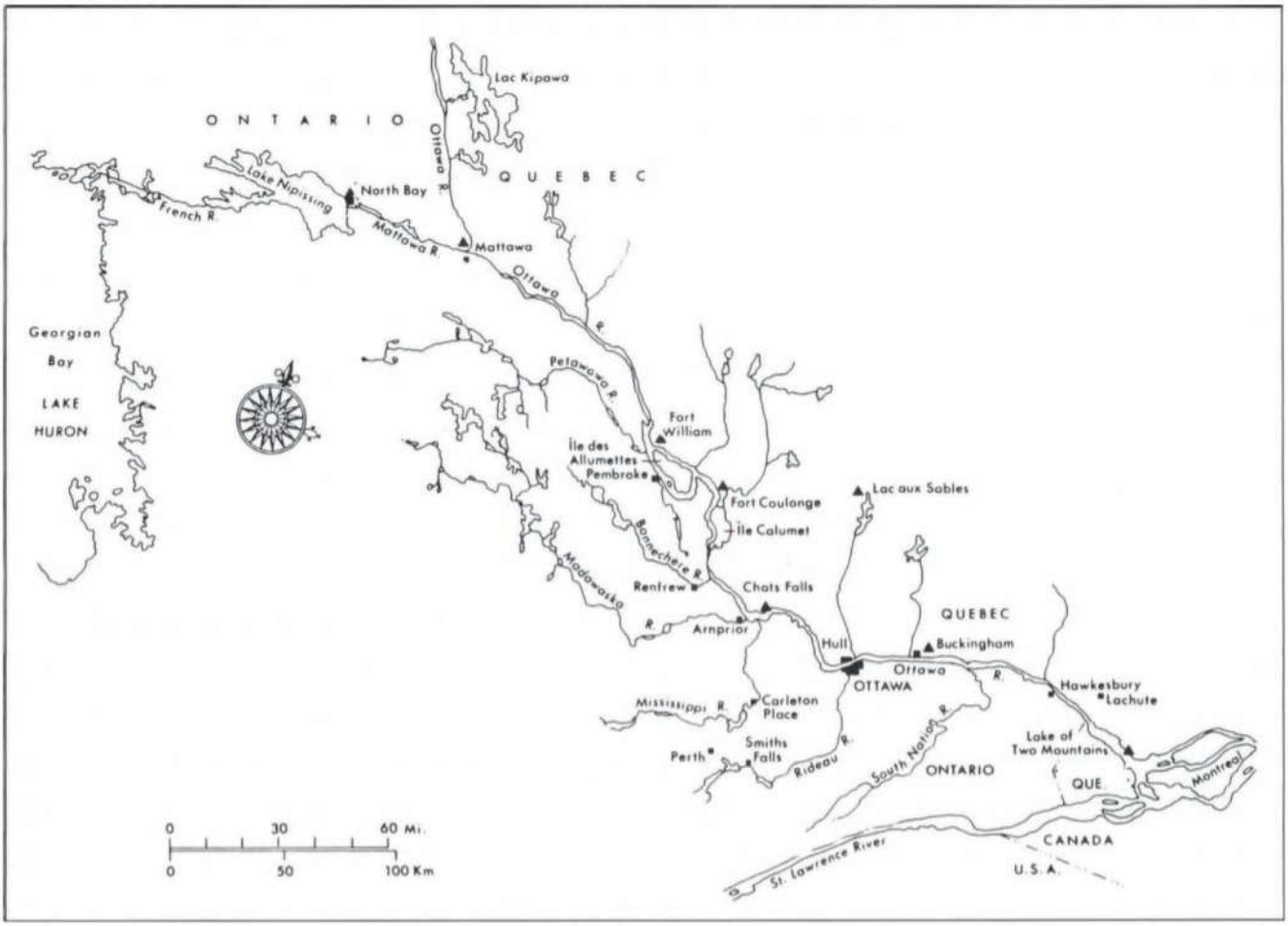
Potential emigrants are warned in this early nineteenth-century British cartoon depicting the horrors of snowbound Canada. Jack Frost is waiting for those who come unprepared.

he "travelled to a sick man in Pembroke forty-six miles away through half frozen mud". It was "a dreadful journey lasting two days and two nights". The following winter was even worse:

> About six weeks ago I came pretty near to being frozen . . . I had to travel 28 miles up the Madawasha [Madawaska] on one of the coldest nights ever remembered in Canada. It blew a gale of wind from 34° below zero. Snow drifts slowed my pace to three or four miles an hour. I started at 11 p.m. Had to stop at a shanty for help to get the horse out of a snowdrift; on the level the snow was four feet thick. Got frostbite on my nose and the skin peeled off. Everybody said I was the only person out that night and it was a miracle I survived.

Nor did the shortage of doctors reduce professional rivalry. In May 1851 he recounts how the new Government Land Agent had asked him to attend his wife's confinement. In the event he did not do so because he was expected to act as general factotum to another medical man, Dr. Casswell. A mutual friend had expressed the opinion to the land agent that Dr. Casswell was older and more experienced. Francis refused "to play second fiddle . . . and I would no doubt have had a full share of the responsibility if anything went wrong". The following year (1852) he was called out to visit a patient who had been treated, unsuccessfully, by other doctors. He noted bitterly that other local doctors "have always behaved so uncourteously and unfairly to me on all occasions that I think it better to be at open war with them and give no quarter, than that they should in such cases use me as a scapegoat to bear all the responsibility".

The absence of social conventions also left frontier society without an effective means of sanctioning wrongdoers. Certainly Francis Codd's record of the frontier supports the view that law and order were scarcely understood. There were regular fights between the French and British, often using pillets (large pegs for holding the timber together). Bar-keepers were always targets for threats, especially from the raftsmen. Most people who had regular contact with the lumbermen armed themselves to the teeth. Men fought with jack knives to settle disputes and lumbermen were frequently killed in brawls. One victor of such a fight



"is said to have killed two others before in the same manner".

The drinking could reach epidemic proportions. Francis records one wedding which he attended where "twenty men drank seven or eight gallons of rum and whiskey . . . I dare say there is as much grog drunk in this township as in the city of Toronto, although the population is not a tenth of it". On another occasion he attended a ball where "an Indian came in and danced in the style of a great bear, yelling every now and then like a banshee. In the end he got drunk and tore Mr. Lyle's shirt off his back and was kicked out; he was a savage old fellow and is said to have murdered a white man". Without a system of Justices of the Peace, district courts or lawyers, it was hardly surprising that violent reputations served to deter potential aggressors more effectively than anything else. Judging from Francis' letters, reputations were the subject of constant speculation.

By December 1849 a Division Court had been established in Renfrew for small debts. Francis came to take a very positive view of the efforts that were made to build a network of local magistrates with a high degree of legitimacy. He was attracted to the makeshift democracy of frontier Canada. By January 1852 he was writing:

> A magistrate in this country is, however, a very different animal from the same in England — he need not spend a dollar a year the more for being a magistrate — many of our magistrates are plain farmers who can just read and write decently but their authority seems to be just as much respected as in England. One of the two magistrates in this village is an old pensioner-sergeant who was quartered in Holt [Norfolk] in the Artillery in 1806.

Civil disturbances were still common, of course, but there were signs that support existed for genuine community-based efforts at law enforcement. In the same letter, in 1852, Francis refers to a concert performed by a local music club ". . . . mostly young ladies taught and led by Mr. Thompson, the blacksmith" which succeeded, despite barracking from the audience, in raising money for a Renfrew Mechanics' Institute Library. He notes that "if the township can raise £25 the government is bound to give £50".

Between 1847 and 1852 Francis Codd's view of Canada changed dramatically. At the beginning he sought to survive, and to establish himself professionally. He was in no doubt as to the drawbacks of living on the frontier. "There are no emigrants up here" he complains in June 1847, "they stay in the more popular parts of Canada where land is more expensive and everything else cheaper". He toyed with the thought of returning to Montreal, where he could earn a regular salary as a doctor in the government employ. His thoughts were also on saving enough for his passage home — by August 1847 he was sure that within a fortnight he would return to England with his passage paid. It would cost him £50.

In fact it took him longer to save for his passage, and the longer he stayed the more he liked the country. He assured his parents that although he was returning to see them he intended "leaving old England perhaps for ever". His complaints were directed at frontier life rather than Canada. By October 1847 he writes:

> Do not think that I am tired of Canada because I grumble about Pembroke and call it an uncivilized hole, for there is as much difference between this part of Canada and any other part as between Letheringsett and London.

Before returning to England briefly in 1848 he wrote to urge his brother Henry to come to Canada to qualify as a lawyer. Half the members of the Canadian Parliament were "lawyers or doctors, chiefly lawyers". He says he "prefers Canada to England under any circumstances", and fears that already he would feel more like a stranger in England than in Canada.

The second phase of Francis Codd's correspondence after 1849 and his return to Canada, is punctuated with repeated pleas for his family to join him there. Although he returned to the same part of the country, he regrets that he had not settled further west "for the farmers can always get cash there for their wheat and here [in Renfrew] the markets are very uncertain because everything depends on the lumber trade". In 1849 he was 26 years old: ". . . where shall I be next birthday? *Here* I hope, although of course I should like to see you all".

His attachment to the frontier grew with familiarity. Local "society" began to develop. In nearby Packenham village there were "two doctors, four clergymen, a lawyer, several storekeepers and lots of civilized girls". This was in January 1850. Soon he was established in his own house with a housekeeper who "is clean and honest but apt to get drunk occasionally". He reviews the prospect of his parents emigrating to Canada, and decides that they are too old to uproot themselves. Anybody intending to emigrate should spend between two months and a year having a look at the country first.

As his own fortunes improve so do those of his adopted country. Increasingly Francis refers to the advantages that Canada has over England. He is critical of Lord John Russell's proposals on Catholic emancipation (this is in March 1851). In Canada the government "does not try to interfere with the Catholic Church . . . Canada is freer". When his brother Henry complains about the Canadian winter Francis retorts that "there can be no worse climate than that of England". Canadian wheat is so good ". . . it was even

Ocean travel was not a pleasant business in the early nineteenth century, as this drawing depicting an epidemic of "mal de mer" graphically illustrates. Thousands, however, were willing to endure the trials of emigration.

sold in New York last year." Canada "is flourishing and all parties feel that it is getting strong enough to defy any attempt at tyrannizing either by Great Britain or the United States". His first obligation, as a Canadian, is to learn French. Three years earlier he bemoaned his inability to talk to the French women in a shanty on the Madawaska River. Now he has "commenced learning French again and mean to stick to it until I can talk fluently".

He begins to take delight in the company of others during his frequent trips into the bush. In January 1852 Francis accompanies the new Presbyterian minister — "none of the evangelical humbug about him that most of the Scotch have — to an Indian camp, seven miles up the ice". They feast on venison and he notes how delighted Mr. Thomson, the minister, is: "he likes Canada very much, he says, and his wife and eight children are coming out next spring".

The last letters are full of advice on how to manage to survive with limited financial resources in an alien environment. He notes that: ". . . it takes a man several years to open his eyes to what may be done with a little capital in Canada, and by that time an emigrant has generally fooled away all he brought. . . " His expenses increased as his practice began to flourish, but he was evidently in demand not only as a doctor. He is asked to give a lecture in aid of the Mechanics' Institute Library Fund, and is called as a key witness in a murder case held in Perth.

The last epistle to Henry, written in December 1851, provides some illuminating detail on the trials and tribulations of emigration, even for the Victorian middle classes. It also strikes a somewhat comic valedictory note as the long correspondence comes to a close. I make no apologies for quoting it at length, by way of conclusion:

> December 15, 1851
> Renfrew, Canada West
>
> [Dear Henry]
>
> . . . your capital, though small and insignificant in England, will be enough to start you in almost anything in the *new* settlements of Canada, if you take care to understand what you are about before commencing; most emigrants having money waste it from not knowing enough of the way of the country.
>
> . . . hang on to every sovereign like grim death, for remember that every one you bring to Montreal will be worth £5 here, and £5 is quite an important sum in these diggings.
>
> Don't bring a new hat — hardly anyone wears them up here, and it would be sure to get spoilt in travelling. It is far better to bring two or three *moderate* sized boxes, than to bring one great chest (like Charles' for instance) which would take nearly a team of horses and ship's crew to move it. . . Don't bother yourself about marine plantagenet guard razors and all these Cockney inventions; you'll get fresh water to wash with, and not be banging about your cabin in a gale *all* the time. . . You'll feel the benefit of having a few books with you at sea, and above all let me caution you against being permitted to play a *single* game of cards, and don't lay bets about the wind, it's folly (some passengers pay their fares that way). If you *must* try *one bet* about the wind, be sure to bet that it will blow from the west. Three times out of four you will be right in spite of appearances. On the *Portly* I won several bottles of champagne by always prophesying a foul wind: even the sailors began to think me somewhat weather wise . . . Follow Parkinson's plan, a little modified, of trying to make everyone think you're on the verge of destitution — it's a good one I'm sure. When you get to New York, profit by my dear-bought experience and go to a first rate Hotel (Rathburn's for instance). It is now two years and a half since I have been in Montreal or even Bytown and if I can muster £3 or £4 I intend to meet you. . . ."

Did Francis Codd meet Henry in Bytown? That we may never know. The correspondence comes to a halt, just as abruptly as it had begun, almost five years earlier. ♦

M.R. Redclift is Reader in Rural Sociology at Wye College, University of London, Ashford, Kent, England.

The Codds in Canada

Editor's Note:

No information has come to light concerning the further career of Dr. Francis Codd and we do not know if brother Henry reached the Canadas safely. There is, however, an interesting entry in Volume XII of the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* concerning a Donald Codd, born circa 1845 in Norfolk, England, the son of Reverend Charles Edward Codd, a Church of England vicar.

The Donald Codd entry informs us that his parents migrated to the Canadas around 1850 and settled at Ottawa. In adult life Donald Codd was a land surveyor and we find him following his profession in the Red River Settlement in 1869 on the eve of the Red River Resistance led by Louis Riel. Codd left the settlement during the disorders in early 1870, returning to Ottawa and joining the Dominion Lands Branch. He was back in Winnipeg in 1873 as land agent, becoming embroiled in Métis land claims. After 1882 Codd worked as a draftsman and inventor. His account of events at Red River in 1869-70 *Some Reminiscences of Fort Garry in 1869-70* was published three years after his death in Winnipeg in 1896, aged 51. A brother, "Dr. Alfred Codd", was listed among his survivors.

Wing Collar, Top Hat and Spats

By Allan Levine

THE LONER
Three Sketches of the Personal Life of R.B. Bennett, 1870-1947

By P.B. Waite. University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1993. 110 pp., illus. $30.00 hardcover; $15.95 paper.

Neither history nor historians have been particularly kind to R.B. Bennett. As Prime Minister of Canada from 1930 to 1935, Bennett has usually been portrayed as the insensitive "bloated" millionaire who ran the country like a dictator during the Great Depression. "In his public relations," Liberal Chubby Power once noted of Bennett, "[he] often exhibited the manners of a Chicago policeman, and the temperament of a Hollywood actor". He dressed like a turn-of-the-century banker with a top hat, striped pants and a morning coat, and had a bulging waistline to round out his appearance. Often lacking a sense of humour, he could be rude, arrogant and spiteful. Beyond questions about his personality and wealth, Bennett has been criticized for being a poor administrator, a terrible political strategist, and a failure as a prime minister. Indeed, his unlikely claim to historical fame seems to have been that he was as or even more unpopular than Brian Mulroney.

Recently, however, Bennett's life and legacy have been undergoing something of a transformation. On closer examination, he does not seem to have been the one-dimensional political ogre who has been so reviled. In 1991 historian James Gray presented a kinder, gentler, even more likeable Bennett in his biography of the corporate lawyer's pre-political career in Calgary. And last year in another book, University of Western Ontario historian Larry Glassford argued convincingly that the Bennett government's efforts to solve the Depression crisis were more activist and economically creative than has been previously recognized.

Now, added to these revisionist assessments, is historian Peter Waite's delightful and elegantly-written contribution. In three fascinating biographical essays prepared for the 1991 Joanne Goodman Lectures at the University of Western Ontario, Waite traces the evolution of Bennett's personal life, character and ideas from his birth in New Brunswick in 1870 to his death in England seventy-seven years later.

Bennett, with Mildred

Discovering the real R.B. Bennett is no easy task. The Bennett papers, as anyone who has researched them will attest to, are dry and impersonal, mainly because Bennett's efficient personal secretary, Alice Millar, destroyed anything she regarded as not having "historic value". Nevertheless, Waite's research has uncovered several untapped and useful sources, including a small cache of love letters Bennett wrote in the early 1930s to the one woman he would have married, Hazel Colville.

Waite has the well-deserved reputation of being the best political historian in the country and his immense talents are evident in this work as well. Like few other academic writers, he is a wonderful story-teller with a good eye for detail and anecdote, but he equally maintains the integrity of his subject with perspective and historical context. Thus he portrays Bennett against a backdrop of religion, imperialism, railways and literature in such a way as to give the Conservative leader's ideas and actions real meaning. This is not to suggest that Bennett, as Waite presents him, was not the rude and arrogant prime minister history remembers, only that like other men he was a complex person of many sides.

From his Methodist mother, Bennett had learned the four Protestant tenets that guided his life: hard work, honesty, righteousness, and temperance. As a school teacher in the Maritimes, as a lawyer in Calgary, and as a politician in Ottawa, he followed this code of conduct religiously. He worked long hours, remained loyal to his clients, never drank, and made lots of money. It was true that he was not much fun; "there was no sense of sport in him," as R.G. Brett, a doctor and later Alberta lieutenant-governor, once observed. Bennett could be unsympathetic, unforgiving and intolerant of others as he was of Tory renegade M.P. Harry Stevens, who Bennett felt deserted him. But he was also a generous man, a loving and caring brother to his younger sister Mildred and usually a good friend to Max Aitken,

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Lord Beaverbrook, whose erratic lifestyle and adventures he secretly admired. In 1927, Bennett was wealthy enough that he could have retired comfortably, yet a sincere sense of duty to the country made him accept the leadership of the Conservative party.

It has been often argued that Bennett was the epitomy of the nineteenth-century capitalist, a Tory with no heart. He was a devoted imperialist, a staunch believer in the greatness of the British Empire in all its glory, and blind to its flaws and racism. Yet as James Gray first showed and Waite confirms, Bennett was an early defender of trade unions and government regulation of the economy. As a politician, he was independent-minded and concerned about the needs of his Western constituents. In general, he thought of himself as a "reformer" in the true sense of the word and, unlike just about everyone else in Canada, he did not view his "New Deal" platform of 1935 as a radical departure from his long-held beliefs.

For all his money and power, Bennett was in the end a lonely man. Waite's discussion of his relationship with women, especially his sister Mildred, who took care of him before she married William Herridge in 1931, and his brief fling with Hazel Colville, a young, attractive and wealthy widow, is the most interesting part of the book. While still in his early thirties, Bennett had rejected marriage, perhaps out of fear of domination, as his friend Beaverbrook thought, or because as Waite so delicately puts it, Bennett may have suffered from phimosis, "a tight foreskin, which caus[ed] him to wince in pain at erection."

Bennett's letters to both his sister and Hazel Colville show not only that he was capable of passion, but also reveal his vulnerability. Here is "R.B." in love with Hazel in 1932: "I shall think tonight as I journey west of a week ago & the sunlight . . . And will be sad & pity myself & be thankful that I know you & grateful for all you have meant to me . . . I miss you beyond all words & I am lonesome beyond cure without your presence & so I go with all my love . . .". He would have married Hazel, but she apparently rejected his proposal. Who knows how the 1935 election would have turned out with Hazel by Bennett's side?

There may not have been much to admire about Bennett's harsh treatment of unemployed Canadians during the thirties or his paranoia of socialism. Rightly or wrongly, he was a politician of action, "a man of deep feelings and deep affections", as his Tory colleague Arthur Meighen remembered him. And in these three essays, Peter Waite has provided the most accurate portrait of the Conservative prime minister's personality and ideas to date. It is hoped that he now completes the work with a much-needed larger biography of Bennett's life as a Conservative leader and prime minister.

Allan Levine is a Winnipeg historian and writer. His book "Scrum Wars: The Prime Ministers and the Media" will be published by Dundurn Press in 1993.

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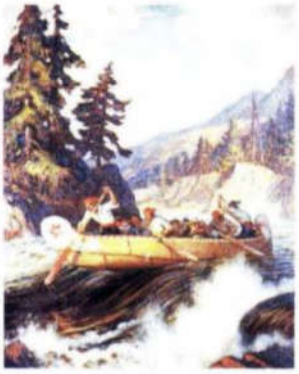

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By A. Sherriff Scott.

B. *S.S. "Beaver" Off Fort Victoria*
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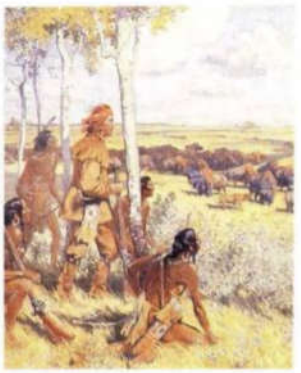
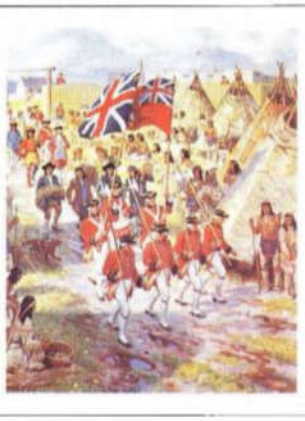


C. *Kelsey Sees the Buffalo*
By C.W. Jefferys.



D. *Trading Ceremony at York Factory*
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E. *R.M. Ballantyne and Chief Trader George Barnston at Tadoussac, 1846*
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F. *Battle in the Bay, 1697*
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Talking About the Weather

By Tim Ball

THE BEGINNINGS OF CANADIAN METEOROLOGY

By Morley K. Thomas. ECW Press, Toronto, 1992. 320 pp., illus. $40.00.

Morley Thomas has made many valuable contributions to Canadian meteorology including a book written with Kenneth Hare, *Climate Canada*, which has been a source of information for students since the first edition in 1974. Other important contributions include studies of regional climate and climate change. Practical, relevant, useful information has been the hallmark of his work and this book is no exception. Few people are better qualified to write this history, and Thomas has provided an authoritative work.

Often our knowledge of history is second hand. For example, we know much about ancient Greece because of Arabic transmission of information. Thomas provides a valuable collection of information that could easily disappear in these days of cutbacks. He also provides a basis for later updates so that the course of history is preserved.

After the introduction, Chapters 2 through 5 relate the establishment and early years of the Toronto Magnetic and Meteorological Observatory. This is followed by two chapters on the development of meteorology and national weather services around the world. Chapters 9 to 12 use this global context for a study of the creation of Canada's Meteorological Service, especially detailing the contributions of Professor George Templeman Kingston, who became Observatory director in 1855. Thomas argues that, "Kingston must be recognized as the Father of the Canadian Meteorological Service". He uses Chapter 13 to establish the condition of that organization at the end of Kingston's career in 1880.

Chapters 14 to 17 are devoted to early meteorology outside Toronto, but Chapter 18 takes us back to southern Ontario for a very brief overview of the Meteorological Service in the hundred years after Professor Kingston.

The book is a solid contribution to our knowledge about early atmospheric science in Canada, but there are some gaps and a clear bias. Thomas is clearly aware of the latter when he makes what amounts to an apology in the introduction. "Since the Observatory on which the Meteorological Service was founded was located in Toronto, the 'mainstream' history of early national meteorology is based in this city." Granted the next sentence reads, "But there are many significant and important items of provincial meteorological history and these are described in chapters 14 to 17." Unfortunately Chapter 14 is devoted to Ontario, sections of which again focus on the Observatory.

It would have been better to place the establishment of the Toronto Magnetic and Meteorological Observatory after the material on the global development of this branch of science. This would provide a more logical general context in which to place this specific development.

Despite the promise of many "significant and important" items from other provinces, they do not appear in much abundance.

Dominance of information from "central" Canada is responsible if adequate coverage of material from other regions is provided. For example, no mention is made of Hudson's Bay Company records in Newfoundland or Quebec. The entry for Newfoundland states that the earliest instrumental records are for 1777, yet data was recorded at York Fort, Labrador in 1775 and 1776 at the direction of Samuel Wegg. The work of Peter Fidler is well documented but not acknowledged and nobody kept more precise records than John Rae, the arctic explorer.

A chapter in the book discusses the establishment of climate networks including those by the Royal Society in England. No mention is made of the request by the Society to establish a similar network in Canada as recorded in the minutes for December 1773. Credit for the meteorological records now with the Royal Society should be given to Samuel Wegg who was concurrently Treasurer of the Royal Society for thirty-four years and Deputy Governor and Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company. Requests for more stations and a better network are also recorded in 1811, although this was inhibited by conflict in the fur trade.

Until recently, the instrumental records maintained prior to the establishment of government agencies were not considered scientifically acceptable. It is still true in everyday situations. For example, when newspapers give previous record temperatures they are only those recorded by a government agency, yet many other scientifically validated records exist. Failure to include this data limits the ability of science, a point Thomas makes in a different context when talking about magnetism, "Scientists needed observed data to develop scientific theory." It also

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leads people to believe that we are living in record-breaking times, a situation that panders to current environmental hysteria.

The book title includes the term "meteorology" and the author uses this to restrict his work to instrumental or, as they are technically called, secular records. This allows exclusion of all the weather diaries maintained by early explorers, fur traders and others, which is unfortunate because they have produced detailed weather information.

Kingston dominates the book, which is appropriate given the lofty title Thomas confers on him. One often gets the impression, however, that this started out as a biography and was converted to a history of Canadian meteorology to appeal to a larger audience. This might explain the limited coverage of the subject beyond Toronto.

Tim Ball is Professor of Geography at the University of Winnipeg and is also widely known as a climatologist and environmentalist.

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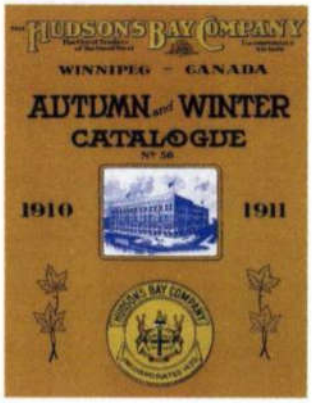

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Grove's Hidden Life

By Tom Saunders

BARONESS ELSA

Edited by Paul I. Hjarterson and Douglas O. Spettigue. Oberon Press, Ottawa, 1992. 260 pp., illus. $29.95.

Ever since Douglas O. Spettigue's discovery and revelation that Canadian novelist Frederick Philip Grove and German novelist-translator Felix Paul Greve were one and the same person, academics (especially Canadian academics) have been having a field day. Two of Grove/Greve's German novels have been translated into English and published in Canada. Following the detective work of Spettigue, other literary sleuths have not only confirmed his findings but enlarged on them. Through Spettigue and his successors we have known for some time that Felix Paul Greve served a term in prison before faking suicide and escaping to the New World; that he had a liaison with a married German woman who possibly connived in his "suicide" and escape; and that he travelled with her and her impotent husband to Italy before he was recalled to Germany by a false friend who laid the charges against him that sent him to prison.

It has also been known for some time that his German mistress (it remains uncertain that they actually married) followed him to the United States (whether on his invitation or of her own volition is again unclear) and that he operated a potato farm in the state of Kentucky. Here, she tells us, Greve abandoned her, though it is possible he may have fled her presence for no other reason than that he grew tired of her sexual demands and promiscuity.

The literary sleuths have also discovered that her name was Else (or Elsa) and that she surfaced some time later as a German baroness and supporter of the Dada art movement in Greenwich Village, New York. By this time she had married an impecunious German nobleman, Baron von Freytag-Loringhoff, who had been virtually disowned by his family and who returned to Germany in 1914, where he committed suicide.

Elsa was known as "the baroness" in Greenwich Village, where she gained something of a reputation as an eccentric and (to some) a gifted person. She delighted in extravagant costumes and in defying conventions. She even, among her acts of defiance, shaved her head upon occasion and, some years later, on her fiftieth birthday, appeared wearing a sugar-coated birthday cake on her head with 50 flaming candles on it, sugar plums, (or matchboxes) in her ears, postage stamps as beauty spots on her cheeks, eyelashes made of gilded porcupine quills, with several ropes of dried figs around her neck — all very symbolic, of course.

In the art world there is a continuing debate as to whether life imitates art or art life. In Elsa's case there could be no doubt as to which preceded which. With her, art imitated life. She was living Dadaism before the Dada movement, with its defiance of convention, had entered her ken.

As has been noted, virtually all of this has been known for some time. Now comes Elsa's own story in the form of an autobiography, written in English in the early 1920s. It is an autobiography penned near the end of her life at the request of her friend, the American novelist Djuna Barnes. For many years it remained virtually unnoticed in the archives of the library at the University of Maryland among other of Djuna Barnes' papers. Now the most recent of the literary sleuths have discovered it and it has found publication.

There is little doubt that, had it not been for her connection with Felix Paul Greve, Elsa's autobiography would have remained unpublished. She was not an important enough figure in her own right for it to be otherwise. But again the academics will love it. It may even help them continue the revision of their theories about Greve/Grove's Canadian writing. For, make no doubt about it, there are literary revisionists just as there are history revisionists. (One wonders what the literary revisionists 50 years hence will make of the views of the revisionists of today!)

What Elsa's autobiography reveals about herself, among other things, is that she was an undoubted sexpot who flitted from lover to lover virtually all of her life. She develops from a naive, small-town dreamer to a Berlin street-walker, till she finds entry into some art circles, in one of which she discovers Felix Paul Greve.

She finds only one fault with her early sex experiences: she was unable to achieve an orgasm. This part of her story is both comic and pitiable. But there seems no doubt that, when she met Greve, she felt that he was her destiny. She describes him as tall, good-looking,

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a lover of fine clothes. She describes him as industrious and desperately anxious to make a name for himself in the literary world. Also, in spite of the fact that he became her lover and travelled with her and her husband to Italy, he was basically very conventional. He wanted to be recognized not only in the literary world but in conventional circles. (Here, perhaps, in addition to her sexual demands and promiscuity, lay the main difference in their characters that was eventually to drive him from her.)

She believes that Greve's imprisonment was the result of a betrayal by a man who was jealous of him because of his relationship with her, and that the imprisonment was undeserved.

Elsa was a law unto herself. She could not abide anyone who disagreed with her. If they disagreed with her, she felt they had betrayed her, or were of no account. Much of her autobiography is an attempt to justify her every action, however irresponsible; and she is as much given to flights of fancy and delusions of grandeur as Grove himself.

Elsa's story tells us basically nothing new about Greve/Grove. It confirms, rather, what has already been discovered. Unfortunately it does not deal with her life in Kentucky or with Greve after he left her there to resurface in Canada as Frederick Philip Grove. The first part of her story especially is written in a sprightly manner, but it tapers off as it goes along and becomes as sad near the end as were the last years of her life. She died in what seems to have been a poorhouse in Paris in 1927. The editors provide the autobiography with a helpful Introduction.

A final note: After reading *Baroness Elsa* it may be interesting to read, or re-read, Grove's first Canadian novel, *Settlers of the Marsh*. There is no doubt that the three main characters in this novel — Niels Lindstedt, Ellen Amundsen and Clara Vogel — are based respectively on Grove himself, Catherine Wiens (his Canadian wife) and Elsa. This I knew long before Spettigue's discovery of the Grove/Greve connection. In my Introduction to the New Canadian Library edition of this novel, dealing with the still-controversial happy ending, I wrote: "My own surmise is that it (the ending) may relate to something in Grove's own past and to the fact that he, like Niels, finally found happiness in marriage only when he was in his forties."

That was publshed in 1965, seven years before Spettigue's discovery of the Grove/Greve connection. I had guessed, in short, a good deal about Elsa — at least in her relationship to Grove — except her name. It was all there, even the imprisonment, in the novel.

Elsa's story we now have. Catherine Wiens' story we shall never have. But Catherine Wiens was no fool. She knew more about her husband's past than has been generally recognized. After all, it was she who agreed that Spettigue was on the right track when he made his decision to do his detective work in Germany, and it was she who confided that her husband had "farmed in Kentucky". It is highly unlikely, moreover, that she knew nothing of Elsa, the original of Clara Vogel.

Grove could not always have been an easy person to live with but, despite his checkered past and recurring financial difficulties, there is no doubt that he and Catherine had a good marriage and a good life together.

Tom Saunders, former literary editor of the "Winnipeg Free Press", has written extensively on Grove and other Western Canadian authors.

Books Received

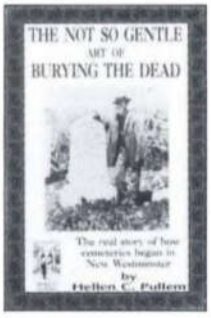
Recently published books on Canadian history include:

Golf in Canada: A History. By James A. Barclay. McClelland and Stewart, Toronto, 1992. 640 pp., illus. $75.00.

The Albernis: 1860-1922. By Jan Peterson, Oolichan Books, Lantzville, British Columbia, 1992. 352 pp., illus. $34.95 hardcover, $19.95 paper.

The City Beyond: A History of Nepean, Birthplace of Canada's Capital, 1792-1990. By Bruce Elliot. Published by the City of Nepean, 1992. 461 pp., illus. $51.65.

Government and Politics in Alberta. By Allan Tupper and Roger Gibbins. University of Alberta Press, Edmonton, 1992. 308 pp., $19.95.



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REGINA IN RUINS

The Beaver

June/July 1993

His Mother Called Him Lester

Did Prime Minister Lester Pearson believe in God? Mostly no, he didn't, says his biographer, John English.*

English thinks "Mike" Pearson, a small-town Ontario minister's son who became a cosmopolitan diplomat, and a man of charmingly apolitical style who reaped many political triumphs, was more complicated than he led us to believe. English's recently completed two-volume *Life of Lester Pearson* suggests that Pearson's unbelief might be a key by which we can unlock the secrets of a man whose own life changed that of his country.

It seems to be time for scholarship to claim the Pearson generation of leaders. The first volume of English's biography won historical and literary prizes in 1989, and the second volume was warmly welcomed last fall. Meanwhile, political scientist Denis Smith is hard at work on a biography of Pearson's great rival, John Diefenbaker. "It's not just the thirty-year-rule," says Smith, referring to the time after which state papers are opened to public scrutiny. "You might say it is the pace at which academics reflect."

English, indeed, suspects that reflection on Pearson is still not complete. Asked how Pearson ranks among the prime ministers, he says it depends on how the major items of his tenure work out — "and that is still up in the air." Haunted by Diefenbaker's electoral magnetism and plagued by scandals in his cabinet, Pearson never led a majority government. Yet the governments of which he was part changed Canada forever, says English. Large-scale, non-British, non-European immigration has transformed English-Canada, but we are still struggling to define the new society that has emerged. Similarly, Pearson's bilingualism-and-biculturalism policy transformed French-English relations in Canada. But, as English puts

John English: Pearson biographer

it, "the verdict on all that will depend on what Quebec ultimately decides." Judging the social programs Pearson introduced in the 1960s may well be the political issue that defines Canada in the 1990s. Will we consider Pearson's domestic-policy legacy a sacred trust or a deficit-spawning burden threatening to bankrupt the country?

Still, English thinks Pearson's stock has been rising in recent years, particularly for the diplomacy with which he earned Canada worldwide respect and its only Nobel Peace Prize. Pearson's international style "will look like the best part of his legacy," he says. "At first Trudeau rejected all that as do-gooderism, but now it looks like a golden age. Today we all believe in the world stage, in globalism, in an active peace-keeping role for Canada. And Pearson took us there."

How Pearson himself got there, how he emerged from "the Alice Munro world" of late nineteenth-century southern Ontario to become an international figure more at home in London society or Geneva conferences than in his Algoma East constituency, is the central theme of English's biography. He points to the personal contrast between Pearson and Diefenbaker that helped make the rivalry between the two men so bitter. "They were the same age, the same Protestant background, they both went to university at a time when very few did. But their papers show people in different worlds. Diefenbaker's world remained the small town, the church hall, the fishing trip, the Rotary Club. But Pearson was cosmopolitan. He left behind the values of his childhood."

And so, of course did Canada. As Pearson evolved away from small-town Protestant values toward an international and secular outlook, he mirrored the evolution of Canada in this century. In understanding Pearson, a modern prime minister for a modernizing country, English suggests there's much that can be understood about Canada's twentieth-century evolution.

Understanding Pearson is no easy task for a biographer. The documents are there, for Pearson came from a generation that communicated on paper more than by telephone. Yet he left few clues to his personality. He was everyone's friend, but few got close to him, and he rarely revealed himself.

*The name John English happens to be shared by two Canadian historians. Military historian Lieutenant-Colonel John A. English, who was quoted in this column in the December 1992/January 1993 issue, is the other.

English believes something crucial is revealed in the way Pearson left behind the faith of his parents and the religion-shaped society that produced him. He finds that so crucial, in fact, that he called the first volume of his biography *Shadow of Heaven*. For Pearson, it was not apparently a great struggle. He had no "double life" like Mackenzie King (who spotted his political promise), no sign of agonizing over belief. He seems simply to have slipped off a mantle of faith as he prospered at Oxford, in diplomatic society, and in the corridors of power.

But World War I had something to do with it. Pearson did not experience the horrors of trench warfare. Although he was in uniform for most of the war (and got the nickname "Mike" from an officer who thought "Lester" unheroic), he never saw action. Early in 1918 "Mike" suffered a kind of nervous breakdown while awaiting assignment to aerial warfare — and near-certain death — in France, and he was invalided home. English identifies a loss of faith in what the war was supposed to be about, and he thinks it left Pearson with a lasting reserve about deep commitments of all kinds.

"Hume Wrong called him a chameleon," says English. "He was shy, so there was a reserve, an evasiveness, that makes him hard to see through." English thinks his reticence about belief made it impossible for him to have been tainted by Soviet influence, or (as was sometimes suggested in Cold War debates) to be a highly-placed "mole". He was not a fanatic, or a bigot either. "The generosity was extraordinary. At a time when anti-Semitism and ethnic slurs were commonplace in his social circles, there's no trace of that anywhere in his papers. He did not have that kind of commitment either."

Pearson did believe in hard work, and he retained a sense of duty that his parents' generation had understood. Ambition and obligation merged, and by the early 1950s they carried him to the top of international diplomacy and Canadian politics. Indeed English's second volume, entitled *The Worldly Years*, is about a man almost without a private life (and the book itself, crammed with detail, lacks the intimacy of the first volume). "After 1945 the public life swallowed him up," says English. "It destroyed his private life. There was no scope for Maryon."

Maryon Pearson, a woman with a caustic wit, is best remembered for saying that behind every successful man is a surprised woman. American diplomat Dean Acheson once commented that Mike worked so hard because he did not want to be at home, and English agrees that the Pearsons' marriage was in many ways a cold one. "She gave him backbone, but she probably did not know a lot of what he was doing. And even when he retired, he took on everything that was offered. He was never home even then."

In English's view, Pearson the public man was comfortable with changes that many of his peers would have found radical. The Liberal Party elite brought him in at the top, made him a cabinet minister even before he had a seat in Parliament, and chose him as party leader in a coronation. Nevertheless, English identifies him decisively with the progressives who transformed the business liberalism of St. Laurent and C.D. Howe into the government activism that replaced it.

"He had a block about the details, and about economics, but he was willing to give leadership, and he could be a risk-taker," says English about the innovations of Pearson's tenure as Prime Minister. Though it was others who did much of the planning, "he had a choice about the social programs, and he could have gone in another direction." English's second volume describes those choices, but his first volume lays the groundwork by its suggestion that Pearson's fundamental break with the rooted values of his past had made him comfortable with change — and fitted him to lead Canada in a rapidly changing time.

John English thinks biography is a good way to raise issues like these. It is a truism that historians who grew up in and after the 1960s turned away from political history, scorning it as too conventional, too simplistic, or too much concerned with the doings of "dead white males". But for John English, who in his mid-forties is very much part of that emerging generation of academics, there's still life in political history — even in the full-scale, two-volume biography of a prominent statesman that is one of its most traditional forms.

"Biography is coming back," he says, pointing in some surprise to news of a recently-opened bookstore in New York that sells nothing but biographies. Even if politics and biography were in eclipse in the university, of course, they never lost their popularity elsewhere. Long before we had scholarly studies of Pearson or Diefenbaker, we had the CBC's *Tenth Decade* and other television portrayals of those years. Looming even larger over studies of those times is the shadow of Newman, the path-breaking journalism of Peter C. Newman, who portrayed that era while it was still hot news, and whose book *Renegade in Power* has fixed Diefenbaker's image for thirty years.

English admires Newman's work both for its intricate, down-on-the-ground legwork and for the inside sources Newman cultivated so skillfully. From his own study of the sources, English speculates in the book about exactly which ministers and aides "leaked" most to Newman. But in biography there can be no last word. English thinks that just as the image of Pearson changes as Canadians continue to assess his legacy, recent events are affecting the way we think of biography. As an example of the influence of individuals, he points to Mikhail

Gorbachev, who brought about the end of the Soviet Union and the Cold War when another leader might still be keeping the whole thing going.

"Economic determinism is not very convincing, and fixed categories are in decline. The influence of individuals seems important again." At the same time, the reassertion of "tribal" values in the world changes what historians do, he argues. As gender, race, ethnicity and other sources of identity command more attention, "even social history has discovered biography."

Talking about Pearson in English's crowded office at the University of Waterloo I found myself speculating about connections between biographer and subject. Like Pearson, John English grew up in a small Ontario town (Plattsville, not far from Kitchener). He also prospered in the cosmopolitan world of a great university (in his case, Harvard), and he shares Pearson's only fanaticism, for baseball. Both men taught history, Pearson briefly and without much distinction at Toronto, English more steadily and successfully at Waterloo. And while English has yet to match Pearson's political triumphs, he did run for the Liberals in the 1988 federal election, and he will be running again when another election is called.

English thinks his own political work helped him in writing about those aspects of Pearson's career, and not entirely to Pearson's benefit. "Because of my experience, I was put off — I don't know if it shows in the book — by Pearson's disdain for everyday politics and constituency management. I could understand much better Paul Martin's resentment of Pearson with his on-high attitude, coming in at the top without doing the day-to-day work." (*Shadow of Heaven* is dedicated to Martin.)

English acknowledges deeper, personal parallels, but he shifts them smoothly into a wider context. "Really, it's about how people from small countries, small communities, tend to look beyond their own boundaries. All those southern Ontario Protestants who become missionaries in China, for instance — they had the same impulse as Pearson to move out, to get beyond the homogeneity of their background. It's a Canadian theme, about people from a small country."

Lester Pearson was prime minister in a time of startling change. He encouraged change without ever seeming a rebel or a radical, a feat that John English links to his personal journey away from the creed he was born into. Yet English also tells how, near the end of his life, the retired prime minister was invited to speak from the pulpit of a church in Aurora, Ontario. He used the occasion to call for a return to traditional values. And for the only time in his adult life that English can find record of, Lester Pearson spoke of "God".

After all the changes Pearson had both seen and personified, perhaps the high noon of the modern world had not entirely blanked out the shadow of heaven. Or perhaps he was just being diplomatic.

John English's "The Worldly Years" was published by Alfred Knopf Canada Ltd., in 1992. "Shadow of Heaven", published by Lester and Orpen Dennys in 1989, is also available in a Vintage paperback edition.

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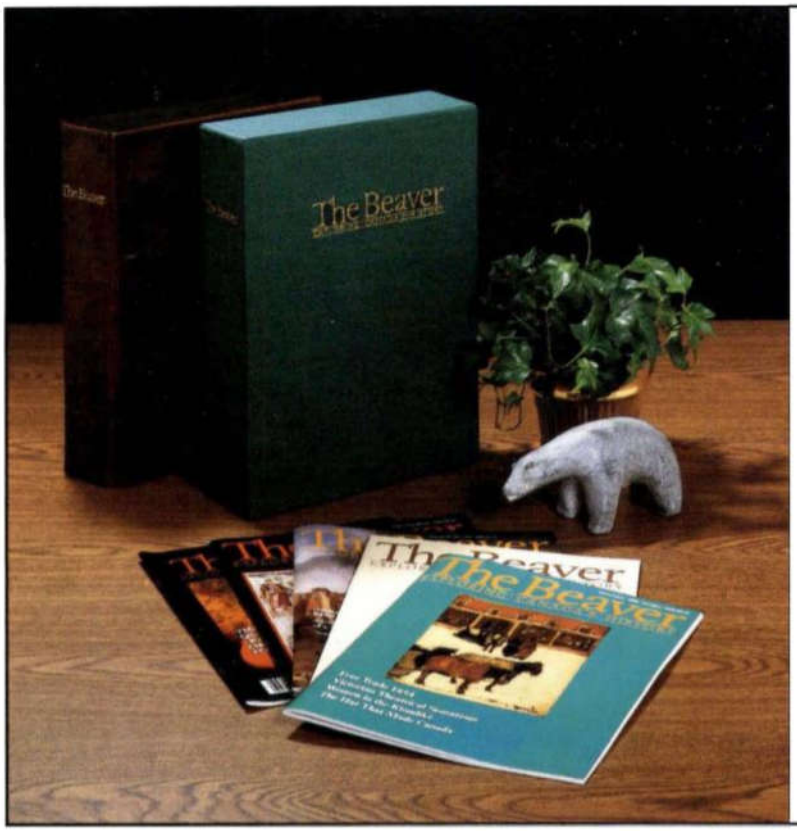

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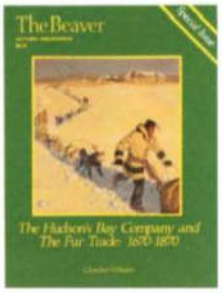

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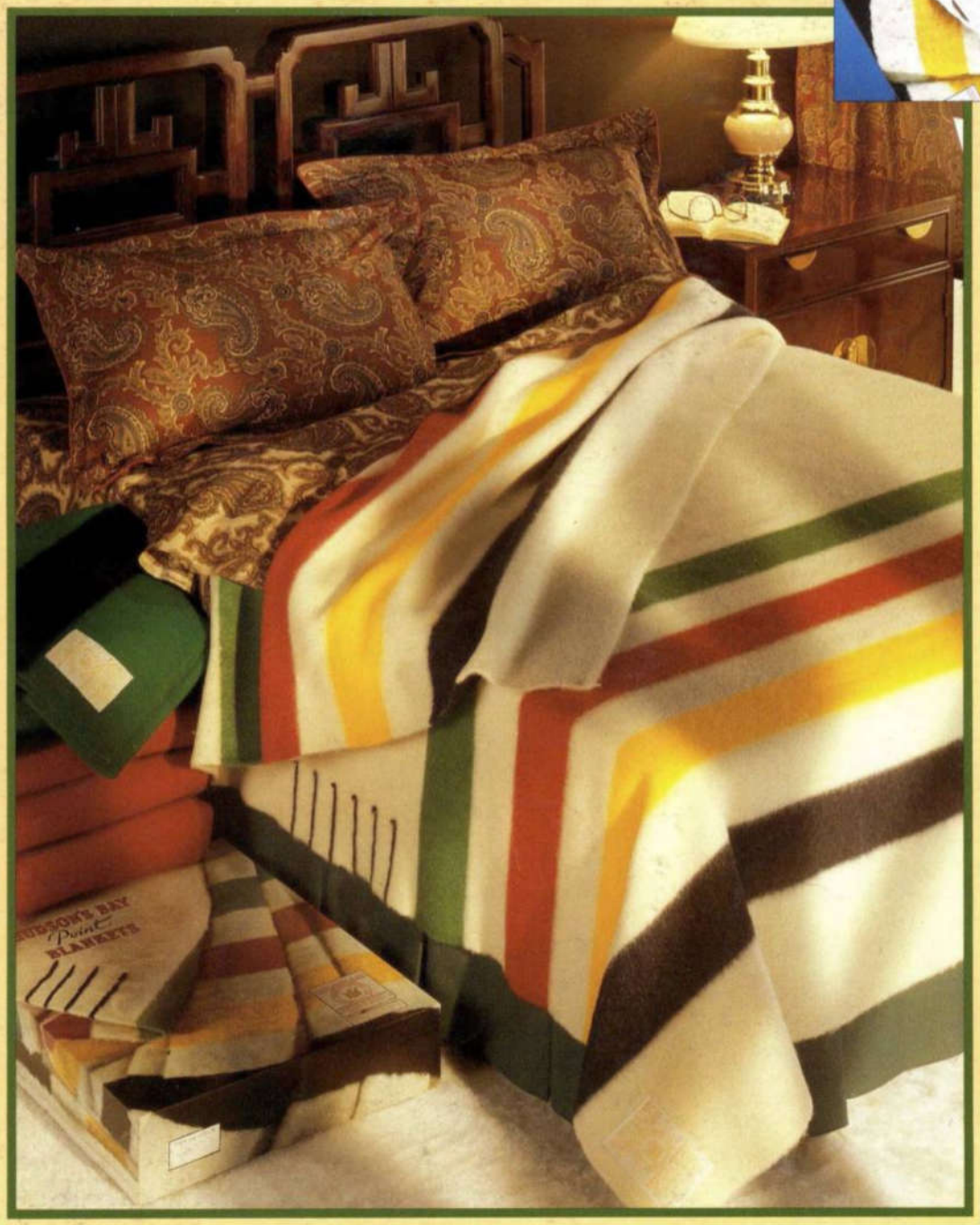

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